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JULY 2015

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### On the cover:

Castle Hill, Devon  
(page 69).

**Photograph:**  
Carole Drake

## THE ENGLISH GARDEN AWARDS

2012

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Stephanie Mahon

2011

Garden Media Guild  
**Environmental Award**  
Anne Gatti

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Magazine Awards  
**Best Niche Lifestyle  
Consumer Magazine**

2010

Garden Media Guild  
**Gardening Column  
Of The Year**  
Mark Diacono

2009

Garden Media Guild  
**Gardening Column  
Of The Year**  
Jackie Bennett

Garden Media Guild  
**New Garden Media  
Talent Of The Year**  
Stephanie Mahon

2008

Garden Media Guild  
**New Writer Award**  
Joe Reardon-Smith

*Most of us are now ready to sit back and take in the scene, gauge our success and start planning how to make next year's show even better*



JOHN CAMPBELL

High summer is the time of year when the garden finally catches up with our plans, our visions of beauty imagined while poring over seed and bulb catalogues, and all the hard work we have put in over spring. There's weeding and watering, of course, but most of us are now ready to sit back a moment and take in the scene, gauge our success for the season, and, with camera and notebook in hand, start planning how to make next year's show even better.

This process is something we do constantly on the team, to achieve our goal of creating a beautiful and knowledgeable garden magazine for you to enjoy. We have been working hard to bring you a bigger magazine with a fresh look and some great new features. Let us know what you think.

This issue, we have some fantastic **SUMMER GARDENS** full of great ideas for your next scheme. They may be rookie gardeners, but the new owners of Elsing Hall (page 38) have managed to rework this much-loved garden to suit them; and similarly a change of ownership and direction at Woolstone Mill House (page 28) reminds us gardens should not stand still, and change can be exciting. And if it is planting insights you are looking for, we discover the secrets behind the **MAGNIFICENT BORDERS** created by Xa Tollemache at Castle Hill (page 69).

You will also find **PLANTS GALORE** to lust after, from great varieties of phlox (page 85) to top biennials to sow now (page 93). They require patience, but our expert nurseryman says his choices are worth the wait, and make excellent cut flowers too. We even have a fantastic offer of six free\* perennials for every reader (page 89) - 'just pay postage.

So take a break and enjoy a little armchair escapism with us, and gather some inspiration for those plans. Happy gardening,

*Stephanie*

Stephanie Mahon, Editor

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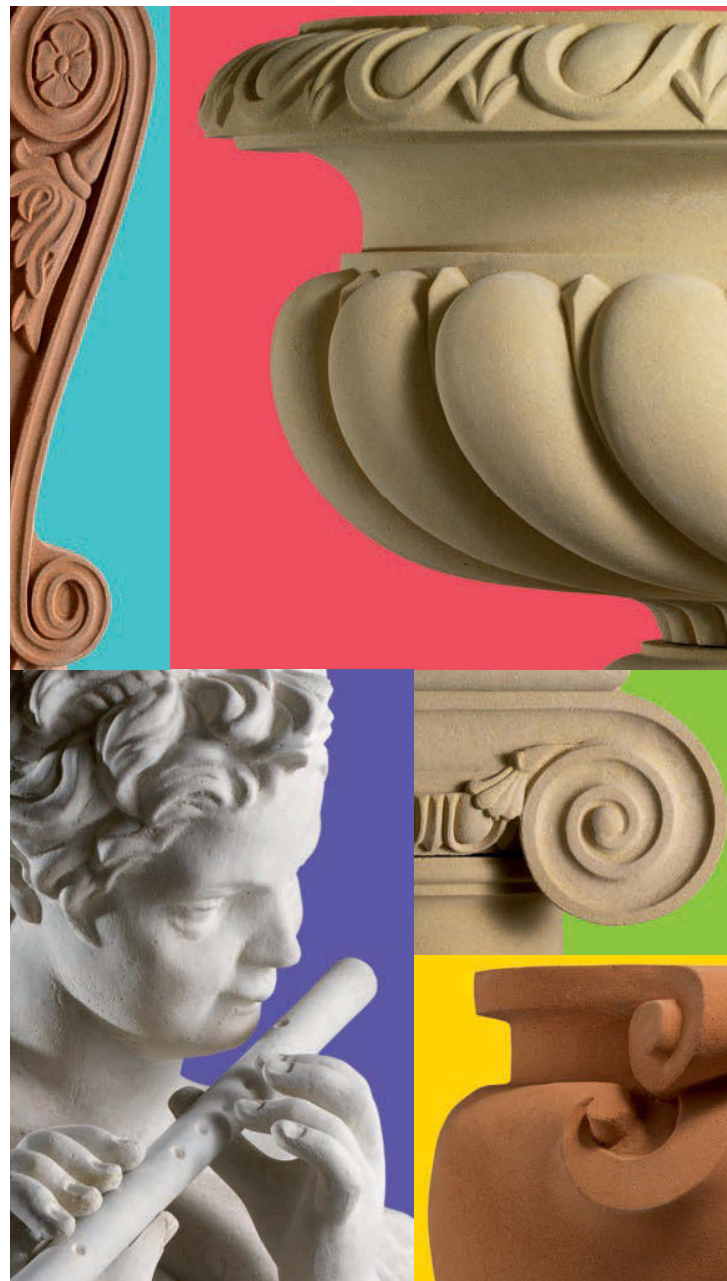
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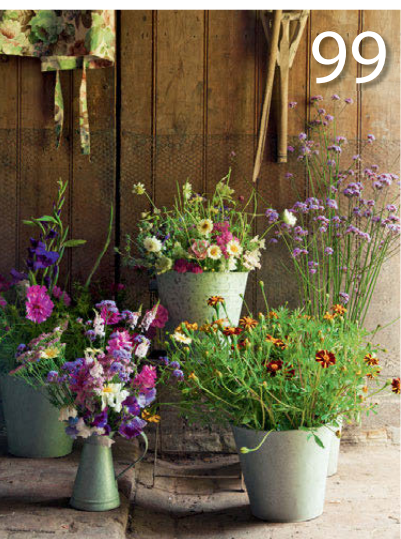
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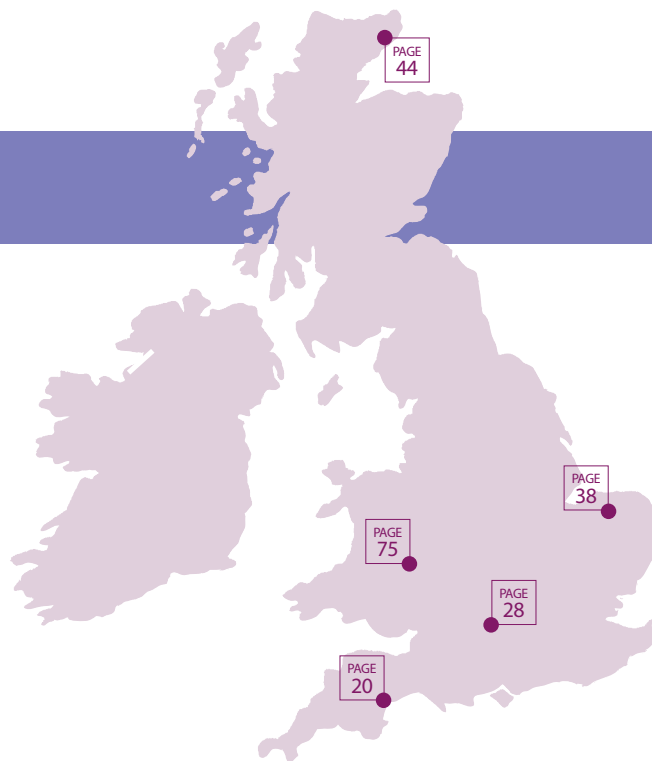
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## HISTORIC CHARM

Explore novelist and poet Thomas Hardy's birthplace in Dorset, the county where his novel *Far From The Madding Crowd* and its recent film adaptation are set.

Despite training as an architect, writing was Hardy's first love, and it was in this cottage near Dorchester that he wrote several of his early short stories. Admire the sweet rocket and roses blooming outside the small cob and thatch cottage, built by Hardy's grandfather, which has barely been altered since the family left. The flower garden is believed to have been set out by Hardy and his friend Herman Lea, who was a tenant at the cottage. To edge the garden, they used roof tiles, which were readily available from Hardy's father, who was a builder.

Today, the garden is lovingly maintained by one gardener and two volunteers. In the traditional fashion, they plant close together with no soil showing. On 15 July, Hardy's other home in Dorchester, Max Gate, will host 'Tea with Mr Hardy', with afternoon tea, readings and *Scenes From The Wessex Novels* performed by the Hardy Players. Hardy's Cottage, Higher Bockhampton, near Dorchester, Dorset DT2 8QJ. Tel: +44 (0)1305 262366. [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hardys-cottage](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hardys-cottage)



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# NEWS & EVENTS

**Sue Bradley** digs up the latest stories, including the best gardens to visit for butterflies and opera, a watercolour challenge and great events for your diary

Time for a  
tea break?



*Enjoy motifs of the summer garden throughout the year with the new Rose & Bee teapot from Emma Bridgewater, £59.95. The range includes a teacup and saucer, and a half-pint mug. [www.emmabridgewater.co.uk](http://www.emmabridgewater.co.uk)*



● **BAYS FARM, SUFFOLK**

A two-acre plantsman's garden with a variety of areas and all-year-round interest, including flowers for butterflies. Open for the National Gardens Scheme on Sundays 12 July, 9 August and 13 September. Forward Green, Earl Stonham, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 5HU. Tel: +44 (0)1449 711286. [www.baysfarmgardens.co.uk](http://www.baysfarmgardens.co.uk)

● **CASTLE ASHBY, NORTHAMPTON**

Castle Ashby's butterfly garden has attracted 18 different species of butterfly, and it was specially planted with plants known to attract insects. Northampton NN7 1LQ. Tel: +44 (0)1604 695200. [www.castleashbygardens.co.uk](http://www.castleashbygardens.co.uk)

● **CHARLECOTE PARK, WARWICKSHIRE**

The gardens and Capability Brown landscape at Charlecote is rich in wildlife and a hot spot for Red Admirals, Peacock butterflies and the Large Skipper.

Wellesbourne, Warwick, Warwickshire CV35 9ER. Tel: +44 (0)1789 470277. [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

● **IFORD MANOR, WILTSHIRE**

Romantic Grade I-listed Italianate garden in Wiltshire designed by the Edwardian architect Harold Peto. Enjoy a family day out on Sunday 5 July for a butterfly day, with guided walks. Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire BA15 2BA. Tel: +44 (0)1225 863146. [www.ifordmanor.co.uk](http://www.ifordmanor.co.uk)

● **THE LAVENDER GARDEN, GLOUCESTERSHIRE**

Nursery set in Victorian walled garden specialising in lavender, buddleja and other species that attract butterflies and bees. Wildlife-friendly gardens, home to a National Collection of Buddleja, which flowers in mid-July and August. Ashcroft Nurseries, Kingscote, Gloucestershire GL8 8YE. Tel: +44 (0)1453 860356. [www.thelavenderg.co.uk](http://www.thelavenderg.co.uk)



IMAGES/TEAPOT - WWW.EMMABRIDGEWATER.CO.UK  
COMMON BLUE BUTTERFLY - CATH WALKER/BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

## Birthday garden tour

A decade has passed since the World Garden (left) was created at Lullingstone Castle by modern-day plant hunter Tom Hart Dyke. Join Tom for a tour and hear about others responsible for bringing botanical delights to the UK during the plant hunters' weekend on 25 and 26 July. [www.lullingstonecastle.co.uk](http://www.lullingstonecastle.co.uk) →





## ARIAS & THE OPEN AIR

World-class opera will return to the intimate setting of a country house garden in Hampshire this month. Mozart's *Phoenix* and Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* are among the productions to be staged in a glass-sided pavilion in the gardens of 18th-century West Green House, between Saturday 25 July and Sunday 2 August. There will also be less-formal 'fringe events', including former Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams talking about composer Benjamin Britten. Since moving into the house, the award-winning garden designer Marylyn Abbott has transformed its gardens, and she started holding an opera season around 10 years ago, with picnics by the lake (above). For more details, tel: +44 (0)1252 844676 or visit [www.westgreenhouse.co.uk](http://www.westgreenhouse.co.uk)

### Watercolour challenge



Some 200 years have passed since the artist Thomas Hornor was commissioned to catalogue the water park at Middleton Hall in Carmarthenshire.

To celebrate this milestone, the National Botanic Garden of Wales, which now stands on the same site, is challenging watercolour painters to capture the modern-day beauty of the landscape. The best entries will be exhibited in the garden's gallery, and there will be cash prizes for the winners. The watercolour challenge is open to artists of all ages and abilities, and continues until Saturday 15 August, with half-price entry for those taking part. A wonderful day out for art enthusiasts. For more information, tel: +44 (0)1558 667149 or email [hollymae.steaneprice@gardenofwales.org.uk](mailto:hollymae.steaneprice@gardenofwales.org.uk)

### Sculpture life after Chelsea

A sculpture representing the marriage of the gods Njord and Skadi in the Viking Ocean Cruises Show Garden was a talking point at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show (below left). The piece, which resembles a ship's bow, was created by Patrick Hurst and is to go on permanent display at Riverhill Himalayan Gardens, Kent. [www.marshallmurray.co.uk](http://www.marshallmurray.co.uk) →



IMAGES/OPERA - WEST GREEN HOUSE WATERCOLOUR - SHUTTERSTOCK  
THE VIKING OCEAN CRUISES SHOW GARDEN - RHINEL HEPWORTH



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## Tulip triumph

Television presenter and garden design student Kate Durr's Gold medal-winning festival garden at RHS Malvern Spring Festival has given a charity cause for celebration. Oxford-based UCARE (Urology Cancer Research and Education) used the festival to launch its pink 'Caresse' tulip (*seen left, in the foreground*), and was delighted when Kate used it in her Constrained Nature garden at RHS Malvern. Show visitors were so taken by the flower that many placed orders for bulbs, raising hundreds of pounds for UCARE. Order your 'Caresse' bulbs from [www.ucare-oxford.org.uk](http://www.ucare-oxford.org.uk)

## THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

The woman behind one of Britain's most famous sculpture gardens is presenting her final collection this summer after 32 years.

The Hannah Peschar Sculpture Garden in the Surrey Hills has provided a platform for many artists who have gone on to have successful careers, including Nic Fiddian-Green, Sean Henry and Peter Randall-Page (*right, Broadside by Richard Kirby*). Now Hannah, her award-winning landscape designer husband Anthony Paul and the garden's staff are pulling out the stops for the final exhibition, with 5,000 bicycle bells gently undulating under oak trees among the standout pieces. The garden will be open until Saturday 31 October. For details of opening times, visit [www.hannahpescharsculpture.com](http://www.hannahpescharsculpture.com)

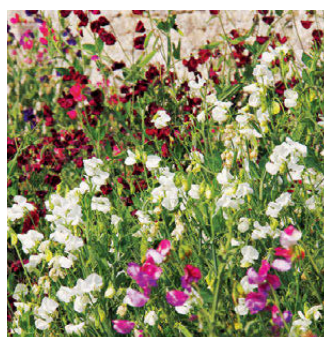


## WHAT'S ON: JULY

### RHS HAMPTON COURT PALACE FLOWER SHOW

**Tuesday 30 June-Sunday 5  
July, Surrey**

See show gardens to inspire you with great ideas to take home, as well as superb plants. It's also a great place to buy gifts and treat yourself. To book tickets, visit [www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk)



### SWEET PEA WEEK AT EASTON WALLED GARDENS

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### OUTDOOR THEATRE AT THE LOST GARDENS OF HELIGAN

**Saturday 11, Cornwall**  
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### NATIONAL FLOWER SHOW AT HYLANDS HOUSE AND ESTATE

**Friday 17-Sunday 19, Essex**  
A fun day out with great

gardening and fabulous food. Adults: £9 (advanced tickets £7.50). Children free. 10am-5pm. Tel: +44 (0)1702 549623. [www.aztecgardenshow.co.uk](http://www.aztecgardenshow.co.uk)

### RHS FLOWER SHOW TATTON PARK

**Wednesday 22-Sunday 26,  
Cheshire**

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### THE GARDEN SHOW AT LOSELEY

**Friday 24-Sunday 26, Surrey**  
There's something for everyone at The Garden Show with exhibitors to enhance your home and garden. Adult £7; child £3 (under fives free);

family £18; concessions £5. 10am-5pm. Tel: +44 (0)1243 538456. [www.thegardenshowonline.com](http://www.thegardenshowonline.com)

### FUCHSIA FESTIVAL AT CAPEL MANOR GARDENS

**Saturday 25-Sunday 26,  
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# STRONG & SWEET

**Jane Perrone** finds liquoricey leaves to grow that aren't naughty but anise

ILLUSTRATIONS HELEN CAMPBELL

**F**oraging is in vogue at present, but it has its pitfalls. By the time you've ruled out pollutant-heavy road verges, plants at dog-leg height and weedkiller-vulnerable field edges, there aren't many places left to look.

Fortunately, there is a solution closer to home. Most gardens are full of plants most of us think of as ornamental, which are, in fact, edibles hiding in plain sight, or have an edible application you probably haven't thought of. Disappointing though my never-fruiting goji berry (*Lycium barbarum*) bushes have been, I found a silver lining when a fellow gardener who had spent time in China suggested I try eating the young leaves. Now I enjoy regular harvests of the goji's mild, minty leaves, arriving in that hungry gap when most other salads are either over the hill or too young for picking. In southern China, the leaves are made into a soup with pork, but I tend to eat them in a mixed, green, garden-foraged salad, combined with violet leaves, hairy bittercress, dandelions and chickweed.

My best and most surprising garden foraging moment came in the form of a chance encounter with anise hyssop, *Agastache foeniculum*. I've always loved

aniseed-flavoured things - as a child, I'd buy a quarter of aniseed balls from the corner shop; as a student, I'd drink sickly sweet Pernod and black; and my current addiction is plucking the leaves of fennel, chervil and dill while working in my garden.

I tried growing perilla, too, convinced that this leaf would offer an aniseed flavour, but once through the trials of germination (it's not the easiest seed to grow, although if allowed to flower it self-seeds mercilessly), the flavour - though good - wasn't really liquorice enough for me.

This year, I thought I'd try some new additions to my aniseed

spectrum, so back in May, I direct-sowed the seeds of anise (*Pimpinella anisum*) for a harvest of the seeds in late August. Meanwhile, in a heated propagator I started some epazote (*Dysphania ambrosioides*, left), a Mexican herb cooked with beans that seems to induce every possible response from 'turpentine' to 'minty', but definitely has more than a hint of aniseed flavour. →



## TOP ANISE HYSSOP TIPS

**Expert advice from Malcolm Dickson, founder of Staffordshire-based herb nursery Hooksgreen Herbs:**

**Varieties:** 'We grow the basic *Agastache foeniculum*. We wouldn't go for any hybrid varieties. We grow from seed at around 15-20°C into plugs, so we get a minimum amount of root disturbance when we move it into a pot.'

**Soil:** 'Good drainage is essential for this plant, so we sow into compost mix with grit and perlite to make sure. Anise hyssop is a short-lived perennial: you can get probably three or four years and that's it. Staking can help stop them flopping, especially when planted in pots.'

**Position:** 'Anise hyssop is happy growing in a decent-sized pot, or in the border. It prefers dappled shade, because it's quite a delicate leaf; it's not as robust as rosemary and lavender. Like any border perennial that dies away and comes back again each year, unless they're looking as though they are going to wilt, you don't have to water in the British climate. If you're mean to herbs, you get better scent and taste; the oils will get into the leaf better if they are not overpampered.'

**Harvesting:** 'The leaves can be picked fresh and dried for storage.'



→ But back to the anise hyssop. It's a pretty herbaceous perennial that grows to about 1m tall, with soft, nettle-like leaves, ideal for borders, raised beds and containers. It's a rich source of nectar that is also highly valuable to beekeepers. Anise hyssop should not be confused with another useful herb, *Hyssopus officinalis*, and as Ernest Small notes in his book *North American Cornucopia*, this plant 'is neither an anise

was sucked away by my neighbour's eucalyptus tree. I grew some from seed, but didn't realise the plant's edible potential until I came across it once again in Martin Crawford's seminal work, *Creating a Forest Garden*, where it was listed as an edible groundcover. It was a lightbulb moment. I marched straight out into the garden, snapped off a leaf and ate it. The flavour

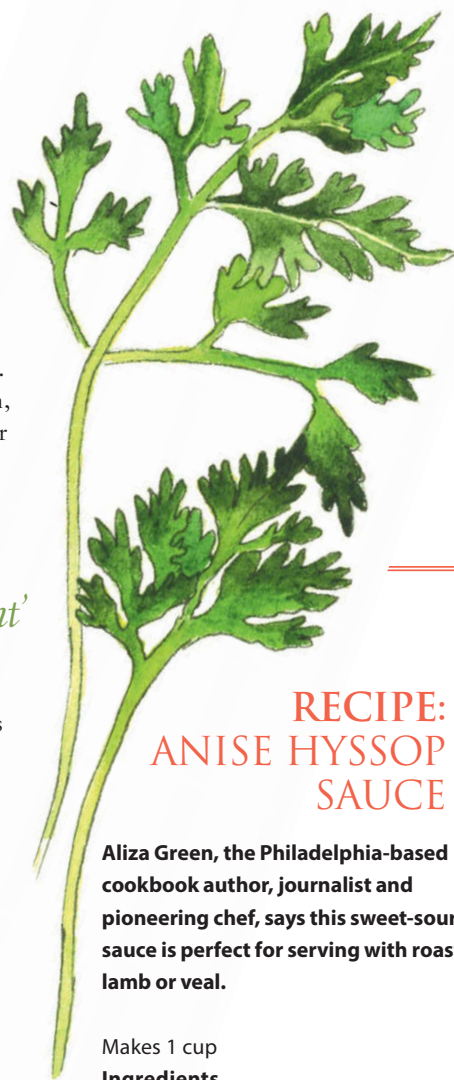
*'Anise hyssop is neither an anise nor a hyssop. Also known as liquorice mint, it's neither liquorice nor mint'*

nor a hyssop. Also known as liquorice mint, it is neither liquorice nor mint.' (Although it is, I should add, a member of the mint clan, Lamiaceae). Perhaps we should stick to the Latin name for clarity; except there too there are pitfalls, namely pronunciation - Americans seem to say 'ag-ah-STAK-ee', whereas Brits mostly prefer 'ag-ah-STASH'. Either way, the word means 'many ears of grain' in Greek, referring to its flower spikes of purple-blue that appear from July to September; foeniculum obviously refers to its fennel flavour. (Its relative, *Agastache rugosa* or Korean mint, is an important herb in Korean cuisine and in Chinese medicine.)

I first came across this North American native prairie plant in one of my favourite ornamental reference books, *Gardening With Shape, Line and Texture* by Linden Hawthorne, while searching for pollinator-friendly plants suitable for a dry border, where every scrap of moisture in the soil

took me right back to the aniseed balls and Pernod days; that strong, sweet liquorice hit that starts in the nose and spreads out across the tongue.

Since then, I've copied the Native American practice of steeping the leaves as a tea, but it seems a shame to limit its flavour possibilities to a cup of hot water. I've also discovered that it's lovely added to the foraged salad I described on the previous page. They're also worth trying as an addition to a fresh fruit salad, or indeed a potato salad, while Aliza Green's recipe (right) is an interesting twist on a Sunday roast accompaniment. Or just pop a leaf in your mouth as you wander past in the garden...



## RECIPE: ANISE HYSSOP SAUCE

**Aliza Green, the Philadelphia-based cookbook author, journalist and pioneering chef, says this sweet-sour sauce is perfect for serving with roast lamb or veal.**

Makes 1 cup

### Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 6 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- ½ cup water
- ½ cup anise hyssop leaves and flowers, coarsely chopped
- 2 teaspoons corn starch
- 2 tablespoons water

### Method

- **Combine the sugar**, apple cider vinegar and half cup of water in a small pot and bring to the boil.
- **Add the anise hyssop leaves** and flowers, and bring to the boil.
- **Turn off the heat** and allow the mixture to steep for 30 minutes. Pour through a sieve, pressing the leaves to extract all of the liquid.
- **Combine the corn starch** and two tablespoons of water in a small bowl.
- **Whisk into the strained liquid.** Bring the mixture to the boil while whisking to thicken the sauce.

Aliza Green's latest book is *The Soupmaker's Kitchen*, and her forthcoming book *The Magic of Spice Blends* will be released this autumn.

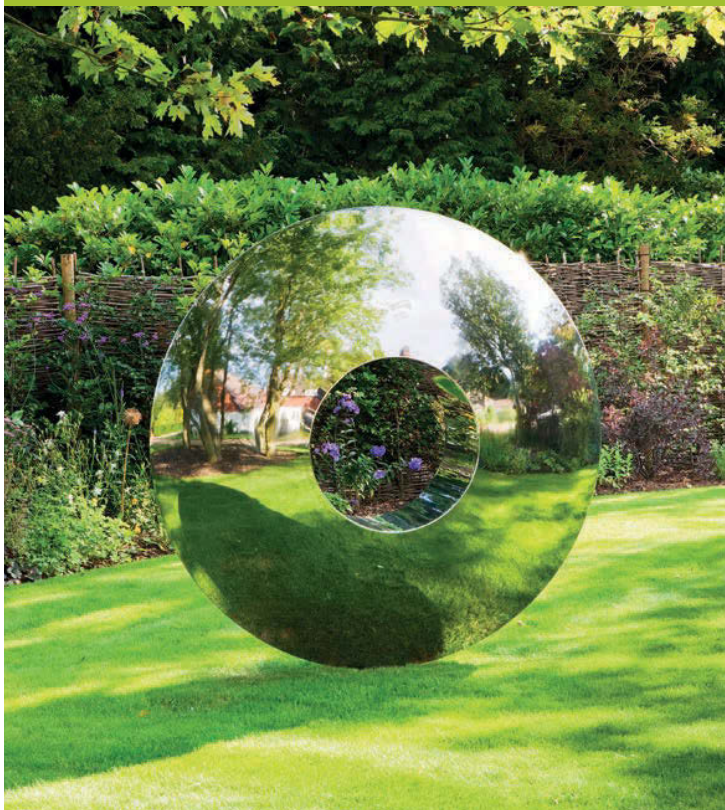






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# Beside the SEASIDE

The Lookout garden has clever planting and a cool coastal feel without giving way to beachcombed cliché →

**PHOTOGRAPHS** ALLAN POLLOK-MORRIS | **WORDS** KATHERINE LAMBERT





The Lookout is a two-acre coastal garden on the Exe estuary in Devon, with tough plants and great views.



Looking out, as if from a ship's deck, over the long, wide Exe estuary is a two-acre garden that featured on Alan Titchmarsh's recent TV show, *Britain's Best Back Gardens*. The title of the series conjures up a slightly dull patch of lovingly tended suburbia, but this is entirely the wrong label to give The Lookout. Reclaimed from both sea and land, it lies at the remote end of the postcard-pretty village of

Lympstone, and its owner has worked with the good, the bad and the ugly of the original site to bring out the strong bones and character of an exceptional garden.

When the Michelmores - Will, a lawyer; and Jackie, a latecomer to the garden design world - acquired the site in 2000, its future looked bleak. The land had been purchased by the then Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in the 1920s to build a short-lived mussel-purification plant.

#### PREVIOUS PAGE & BELOW LEFT

The planting by the house consists of *Stipa gigantea*, hebe, sea thrift, pine, phormiums and yuccas.

#### BOTTOM

A garden room offers great views of the estuary past a border of euphorbia, carex and clipped blackthorn.

#### OPPOSITE

The wildflower meadow thrives on the poor soil.

The subsequent owners put in some tamarisk and established a lawn, but the whole place was eventually overrun by brambles. An allotment perches on the adjoining hillside; this is now partially screened by Monterey pine, eucalyptus and deciduous trees, but in fact it makes an appealingly random and utilitarian backdrop. It fits in well with the handsome modern house, whose slate, wood and stone echo the colours and moods of the estuary mud.

The house now looks truly embedded in its setting, but protecting the site it sits on required more than 1,000 lorry loads of aggregate and soil, brought in down narrow country lanes and through the village. The building programme was constricted to avoid disturbing the estuary birds - this heavily protected stretch of the Exe (designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a RAMSAR wetland of international importance) is bounded by bird and nature reserves. And it was further challenged by the tidal nature of the river. →





*Reclaimed from both sea and land... The house now  
looks truly embedded in its setting*







→ The scale of the site and the water frontage is unusually large on the Exe Estuary, but with this feeling of space comes exposure on all sides.

Jackie's childhood memories are of coastal path walks and moorland rambles. A feeling for ruggedness and evocative natural scents - peat and heather, gorse banks, damp wooded valleys - informs her gardening even now. In that spirit, rather than grubbing out the hooligan blackthorn survivors above the sea wall, she has made them into a unique feature: some have been cloud-pruned, others left to their own devices, and they echo the modulations of the mud, and the silhouettes of the parkland oaks at Powderham Castle across the estuary. A diamond-shaped 'window' has been cut through, and their gnarled trunks pattern the grass with shadows.

Tussocks of grasses and hummocks of sea pinks evoke sand dunes and cliff







tops, and plants hug the ground like the bladderwrack on the beach. But whimsy is ruled out. Although Jackie will beachcomb for sculptural driftwood, 'it's a mistake to over-accessorise when you are coastal,' she says. 'If something wonderfully water-worn washes up, it might be found a home, but you don't need to install a beached boat as a feature when you've got the real thing out there.'

In her planting, Jackie adopts a 'scattergun' approach, combining repetition of favourite species, such as euphorbias, hebes, sea pinks, dwarf pines and grasses in variety, with erratic, naturalistic spacing. On the estuary side, the garden is (deceptively) wedge-shaped, and the shallowness of the space between the house and drop to the beach makes it difficult to create drama. Her solution here is to introduce layers and unexpected projections. This is especially evident



in the sheltered croquet lawn by the house terrace.

The border that leads up steps to a wildflower meadow is planted in a relaxed tapestry of clumps, feathers and spires: upright *sisyrinchiums* and *libertias*, muscular *Euphorbia characias* and *Helleborus foetidus*, oregano and chives for scent, *Stipa gigantea* and *Anemanthele lessoniana* for movement. A *Poa labillardierei* 'tail' within the border acts a diversion rather than a barrier.

The wildflower meadow beyond is home to ox-eye daisies, buttercups, campion and cow parsley; merging in with the naturalistic feel of the perennial borders below are camassias and some of the more delicate alliums. It is edged on one side by white-trunked birches, and the bank which screens the railway line was built up when the foundations were dug out for the house. Maintenance is relaxed: it is trimmed once a year in September, topped off high due to wildlife, while winter involves little more than a watchful eye on the brambles.

A small pool at the top is fringed with flag irises, ivy, sedge and ferns and encircled by a double path at a higher and a lower level; the patch of wooded wilderness beyond is thickly carpeted with ivy. The climax comes at the end of the garden, where there are

**LEFT** Two Adirondack-style loungers are the perfect place to take in the open views. **BELOW LEFT** Jackie has cut 'windows' into her shelterbelt of crown-raised blackthorns to filter the wind. **ABOVE** An outdoor fireplace takes pride of place in this lovely loggia, perfect for eating al fresco.

uninterrupted 180-degree countryside and estuary views.

Walking back along the path fringed with blackthorn, atop the 2.4m-high sea wall covered with *Armeria maritima*, a gravel path that curves through phormiums, hebes and grasses leads to the swimming-pool area: a blue, pink and green Mediterranean enclosure of lavenders, salvias, *Melianthus major* and over-wintered succulents. Spiky plants, especially *Yucca gloriosa*, play a protective role, and low-growing grasses and rounded pebbles bring the seaside back in.

Beyond is every child's playtime fantasy: a super-sized lawn, a tree house half-smothered by tamarisks, a boathouse, and a beach-volleyball court trailing with rosemary, yuccas and ivies, where teams from nearby villages do battle every Tuesday. The eucalyptus at the end took a direct hit from blowtorching winds on Valentine's Day 2014, even though the lawn is backed by a wall heightened to prevent the waves breaking over. At The Lookout, the elements rarely sleep.

**The Lookout, Sowden Lane, Lympstone, Devon EX8 5HE. Open for the NGS on Friday 26 and Sunday 28 June. Also by appt for groups. Visit [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)**

Jackie's coastal garden tips →



# The Lookout garden notebook



## COOP DE GRACE

A wooden tree house built by Will Michelmores for his two young sons some 15 years ago has been reimagined as a stylish chicken house on stilts. It was a serendipitous decision to position it on the perimeter of the broad main lawn, clearly visible from the house and almost overwhelmed by the feathery canopy of two fine old tamarisk trees.

## CLASSY SEASIDE FEEL

Found natural objects - pebbles, driftwood, coils of rope - are deposited at appropriate points in the garden. Beside the house, they are combined with wellies, nets and all the other paraphernalia of a seaside home. The poet Herrick favoured 'a sweet disorder in the dress'; at The Lookout it has been brought into the garden.



## PLANTING IN THE RAISED BEDS

*Yucca gloriosa* 'Variegata' provides protective pinpricks on both levels of the raised beds, while the foreground has a fragrant and colourful Mediterranean mix of rosemary, thyme, aloe, euphorbia and *Allium cristophii*.

## Jackie's top coastal garden tips

- **Build up your shelterbelt in layers**, starting with tough deciduous natives like blackthorn and hawthorn to filter salt-laden winds. Plant as whips, stake well, use tree guards and keep them well trimmed so that they thicken up and stay sturdy.
- **Cloud-pruning shelter belts** such as blackthorn (or less-vicious hawthorn) produces a softer-looking, undulating hedge. Cut each plant hard back to leave a 60-90cm trunk, then hand-prune the resulting new branches, following the natural contours of the plant's organic shape. If using blackthorn, which has poisonous thorns, wear gauntlet gloves and remove and burn the clippings to minimise the chance of injury.
- **Use a gritty mulch and pebbles** (from a garden centre, not the beach) to hold in moisture and reduce wind desiccation. Unlike bark, a stony mulch doesn't blow around or decompose, and it associates well with coastal plants.
- **It's tempting to fill** a coastal garden with exotics, but celebrate its Englishness. Keep sub-tropical/Mediterranean species out of sight lines to the sea view. Many strong-shaped species relate well to buildings.

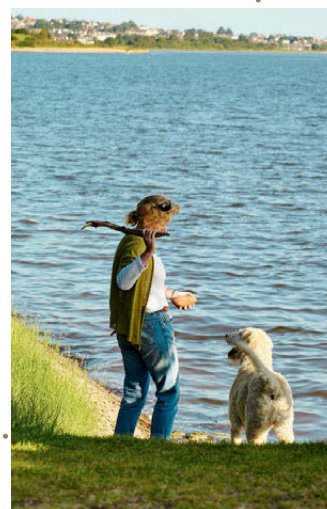
## Garden challenges

**EROSION:** Some 50 years of neglect of the original sea wall resulted in considerable erosion, so Will and Jackie had to start by rebuilding the 200m-long sea defence along the estuary and put back the land behind it - more of a civil engineering job than a domestic landscaping project.

## ALSO IN THE AREA

If you are visiting The Lookout, Jackie also recommends these local hotspots:

- **GARDENS Bicton Park Botanical Gardens** A fascinating collection of period pieces, including formal and informal gardens dating from the early 18th century, an American garden and pinetum, water and hermitage gardens, a flint shell house and a vast palm house that is one of the oldest in the country. East Budleigh EX9 7BJ. Tel: +44 (0)1395 568465. [www.bictongardens.co.uk](http://www.bictongardens.co.uk)
- **NURSERY Lympstone Nurseries** A family run business offering a variety of home-grown seasonal bedding and vegetable plants and a good selection of perennials, including some coastal and unusual plants. Open April to August. Church Road, Lympstone EX8 5JU. Tel: +44 (0)1395 263850.
- **HOTEL The Globe Inn** In the stunning estuary village of Topsham, a 16th-century coaching inn renovated in traditional style, which also has a bar and restaurant. Fore Street, Topsham EX3 0HR. Tel: +44 (0)1392 873471. [theglobetopsham.co.uk](http://theglobetopsham.co.uk)







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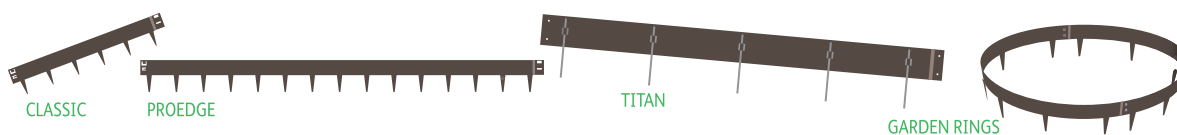
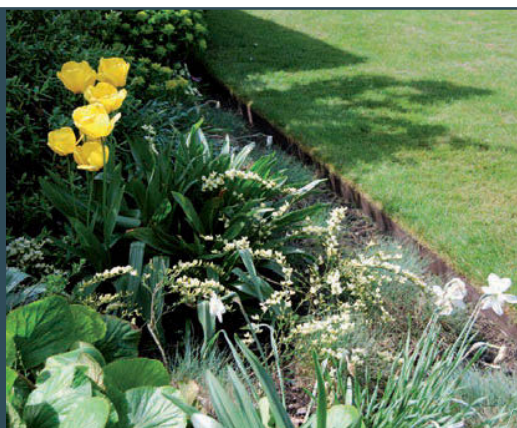


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# Family AFFAIR

Tended by one generation for decades, Woolstone Mill House has been passed onto the next, and is evolving in exciting ways →

PHOTOGRAPHS CLIVE NICHOLS | WORDS NAOMI SLADE



A photograph of a formal-style country garden. In the foreground, there are several large, rounded, and rectangular hedges made of boxwood, some with small flowers. A wooden bench is positioned in the middle ground. Behind the bench, there are tall, narrow, conical topiary trees and a large, rounded topiary bush. The background is filled with dense green foliage and trees. The overall scene is a well-maintained, formal garden.

Woolstone Mill  
House has  
a two-acre  
formal-style  
country garden.





Some gardens are created as works of art; their perfection preserved in stasis, unchanged by time. Others seem destined to evolve. And in the village of Woolstone, hidden in a fold of the West Berkshire Downs, is a garden that seems to delight in its fluidity, relishing its role as a canvas upon which ideas can be iterated.

Wrapped around three sides of the late 18th-century former mill house, the garden has direct views of the Uffington White Horse. Where the hillside meets the plain, a lively chalk stream rises and runs past the building to join the mill carrier stream at the far end of the garden, thus creating a river island upon which sits a former stable.

Yet despite human activity in the area for upwards of three millennia, the garden itself is a relatively new creation. 'When we moved here in 1976, the drive came up to the front of the house,' explains the garden's

**ABOVE** At present, the layout of the garden is influenced by the Arts and Crafts style. The lawn is studded with box fondants, and yew hedges divide the garden into rooms. Justin plans to take out the parterre (previous page) and edit other aspects of the space.

former owner Penny Spink. 'There was a field beyond it, and another to the side. We immediately moved the drive behind the house so that we could have a south-facing garden.'

Her husband Anthony is the grandson of Edwardian landscape architect Thomas Mawson and, having been brought up in a Mawson-designed garden, had

Penny, whose wide social circle has contributed both plants and opinions over the years. 'The *Hydrangea aspera* was dug out from Hadspen and *Rosa* 'American Pillar' was donated by a neighbour. She turned up one day with this huge rose in a wheelbarrow and declared 'I'm too old for this, you can have it!' Vita Sackville-West

*This is a garden that is flowing through time and embraces its changes. Nothing is static*

a natural interest. Their layout was formal, traditional and influenced by the Arts and Crafts style. Penny then devoted the skills she had developed as a professional florist to a frenzy of planting. And so, in the fertile greensand soil beneath the chalky hill, the garden thrived.

'We put the grove of medlars in. In fact, we put everything in!' says

apparently hated it and said that it was blowsy!

A formal parterre was installed in front of the house, and the lawn punctuated with box fondants, while yew hedges and wide traditional borders divided and compartmentalised the space beyond. A nut walk based on that at Sissinghurst led to an informal open





woodland with cut-leaved alder *Alnus glutinosa* 'Imperialis', catalpa and *Davidia involucrata*. On the island, the medlars were underplanted with camassias, and cornus, roses and *Hydrangea quercifolia* grow nearby. Penny and Anthony also installed an enviably large treehouse in the branches of an elderly willow, and linked the garden together using bridges and stepping stones.

The property is now owned by Justin, the couple's garden-designer son. 'I think it is important to have good circulation around the garden,' he says. 'You should be enticed to explore rather than look out on a plain lawn.' He made his mark on the garden 10 years ago, designing a veg patch for his father as a retirement present, and now in control of the reins, he has wasted no time in applying his own contemporary twist.

'It was a flash of inspiration, but for ages I didn't want to face up to →

**ABOVE RIGHT**  
A bridge leads from the main garden to an island in the river that flows past the property, where you will find the 'reading room' and the treehouse.

**BELOW RIGHT**  
The loose herbaceous borders are punctuated by strong clipped evergreen forms.







**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT**  
*Dahlia* Happy Single Wink has striking dark purple foliage and its open flowers attract bees and pollinating insects; *Rosa* 'Buff Beauty' has double flowers and a strong fragrance; *Anemone hupehensis* 'Hadspen Abundance' has two-tone petals and will grow in sun or shade; *Helenium* 'Sahin's Early Flowerer' blooms into autumn with showy, daisy-like flowerheads; *Salvia involucrata*, or rosy-leaf sage, has tubular, two-lipped, purplish-pink, 5cm-long flowers with conspicuous pink bracts which soon fall; *Diascia integerrima* makes a mat of neat foliage with racemes of cup or bell-shaped flowers.







**LEFT** The topiary sheep are a fun way to link the garden to the countryside beyond. **BELOW** The Uffington White Horse can be seen beyond the curving herbaceous borders.

→ changing the garden I grew up with,' he says, 'I spent five months procrastinating, and about 20 minutes drawing up the plan. It immediately felt right.'

Justin credits his parents' reconfiguration of the garden with teaching him about the importance of aspect at a very young age.

And now it is his turn. He plans to cut back the established yew hedges, remove the herbaceous borders and oval lawn of the south garden, and open it up to create a perennial meadow.

'I think that the style of a meadow is more harmonious with the backdrop,' explains Justin. 'Part of

me is sad about taking out the borders that I grew up with, but I have long felt that I would prefer a more natural planting scheme, one which fits with the amazing view of the Berkshire Downs and the Uffington White Horse. Mum tells me that Rosemary Verey was disappointed that they had put the yew hedge too far away from the house, but paradoxically, it works better with my design.'

While some people would be horrified by such drastic alteration, Penny and Anthony have taken it rather well. 'Mum and Dad are different,' says Justin. 'Mum is a progressive gardener; Dad worries more. There is a bulge in the yew hedge because he didn't want to cut the tropaeolum back, for example. 'Why would you change it?' he thinks. He doesn't say anything, but you just know! He has kept his sense of humour about it, though.' →







→ Indeed, Penny is enthusiastically supportive of the changes. 'I have seen Justin's gardens and they are wonderful, so I have absolute confidence. It is very different to our style, but it is glorious.'

'The south garden always sloped towards the stream. Justin has flattened it out, and it is so much better! I have taken many of the plants out of the borders, as they were being cleared anyway, and I have transferred them to our new home. It has suited us both really well.'

The new design will also be much less labour intensive than its more formal predecessor. 'The box hedges were inclined to get blight and took all the moisture out of the soil, so establishing things in between was a sweat,' says Justin. 'Before, there was a runway - a formal avenue straight through the garden. But now there will be curving, mown paths: we have lost the axis.'

'The perennial planting will have lots of repetition, with plants

**ABOVE** This calm seating area by the outbuilding on the river island is planted mostly with white-flowered plants, including *Schizophragma hydrangeoides*, *Hydrangea* 'Annabelle' and *Agapanthus* 'Enigma'. **BELOW**

A hot scheme with daylilies, achillea, roses, knautia and dianthus.

such as achillea, phlomis and sanguisorba, and it is dipped in the middle so you can see the topiary sheep and the rams in the field. I want it to be a seamless transition to the hill beyond the garden,' he explains.

This is a garden that is flowing through time and embraces its changes. Nothing is static, nothing lasts forever. Plants arrive and then

leave, and designs come and go. A garden such as this is elevated by the boldness and clarity of its successive generations of custodians.

**Woolstone Mill House, Woolstone, near Faringdon, Oxfordshire SN7 7QL. Open for the National Gardens Scheme on Sunday 13 September, from 2-5.30pm. For more details, visit [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)**





# Woolstone Mill House notebook



## LOOKING OUT

Justin's naturalistic new planting scheme will work sympathetically with the surrounding fields. 'It is all about the backdrop,' he says. 'In an introspective courtyard garden, it would be different - the plants could be more dominant and have more impact.'

## Garden challenges

**CHANGE:** 'As an open garden, it has been loved by lots of people, so one challenge has been how they will respond to change,' says Justin. 'But the use is now different - it is now a family garden with young children. It is no longer open 100 days a year, so I have responded by not worrying about it too much!'



JOHN CAMPBELL

## ROOM ON THE RIVER

The outbuilding on the river island was originally used as a stable, then a teenage hangout. It was reclaimed by Penny and Anthony as a reading room, and is now Justin's office.

## WITH A HEAVY HEAD

Penny saw the box sheep in France, the ideal response to the real sheep in her paddock. A local craftsman made the heads, but in durable stone rather than wood. 'To be honest, they are a little bit heavy!' she says.



## Justin & Penny's garden tips

- **Don't be mean** when it comes to watering newly planted areas. Plants will establish better when they are given a good drink.
- **Don't be afraid** to move things or get rid of plants and features altogether. You sometimes have to be brave, strong and ruthless to get a better garden.
- **Remove decaying trees and shrubs** - don't prolong the agony. Watching a healthy new plant grow and thrive gives much more pleasure.
- **Be adventurous** within the confines of your soil. Grow things that will thrive, but don't be afraid to experiment. We planted *Exochorda x macrantha* 'The Bride' and *Arbutus x andrachnoides* in the chalky ground, and they do surprisingly well.
- **Repeat plants, shapes and colours** to add coherence to a planting scheme. Putting plants in ones and twos risks a 'spotty' effect.



## ALSO IN THE AREA

If you are visiting, Justin and Penny recommend:

- **GARDEN The Old Rectory** The garden at the former home of John Betjeman is a riot of interest, with well-tended borders and many interesting and unusual plants. Wantage, Oxfordshire OX12 8NX. [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)
- **NURSERY Penwood Nurseries** This family run company is a bit of a local legend, and produces much of its stock on site. The Drove, Penwood, Newbury, Berkshire RG20 9EW. Tel: +44 (0)1635 254366. [www.penwoodnurseries.co.uk](http://www.penwoodnurseries.co.uk)
- **PUB The White Horse Inn, Woolstone** A 16th-century thatched inn with good food and an informal atmosphere, in a good position for walks on the Ridgeway. Woolstone, near Faringdon, Oxfordshire SN7 7QL. Tel: +44 (0)1367 820726. [www.whitehorsewoolstone.co.uk](http://www.whitehorsewoolstone.co.uk)



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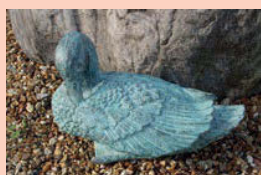
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Old-fashioned roses mix with delphiniums and *Phlomis fruticosa* on the terraces of Elsing Hall, a moated, walled 10-acre garden in Norfolk.

# A fresh approach

Two new gardeners have taken on the much-loved garden of Elsing Hall, and gently updated it →

PHOTOGRAPHS ANNE GREEN-ARMYTAGE | WORDS JACKIE BENNETT





**ABOVE** Looking across roses and delphiniums (including 'Kazanlik' roses in the foreground) to the moat and gardens beyond. **BELOW** Elsing Hall seen from the far side of the moat on the east side. Black swans swim in the reflection of the house, which was built during the 1470s.

Garden visitors don't like their gardens to change, it seems. When Patrick Lines and Han Yang Yap left Hong Kong in 2006 and chose a moated manor house in Norfolk as their home, they didn't realise quite what a special place Elsing Hall held in the hearts of those who knew it. The garden had been tended by Shirley Cargill since 1982, and every Sunday in summer

visitors would trickle through the gates to see this quintessentially English garden, with its old-fashioned roses and romantic air of slightly faded grandeur.

Initially, Patrick and Han Yang had not intended to open the garden at all. After renovating the house and moving in a year later, they were shocked by how quickly a 'romantic' garden can become unruly. 'We had first seen the garden in autumn when

everything seemed calm,' says Han Yang. 'Then when we returned in June, we really looked at the garden for the first time. It was pretty daunting - the pink geraniums and the roses had taken over!' Planted more than 20 years ago, the collection of 400 or so roses had been running wild. 'Shirley didn't believe in pruning,' says Patrick. 'It was lovely - but that was her style. At first there was a lot of pressure on us to maintain that style.'

Han Yang and Patrick met in Hong Kong, where they both worked for 13 years. Having lived in apartments, they had absolutely no gardening experience. Feeling they were out of their depth, they asked horticulturist Ian Stanton for advice. Ian recommended two ex-students from Norfolk's Easton College, Robin and Ali Mahoney, who came to work at Elsing for one day a week.

The roses were tumbling forward away from the walls, obscuring the plants beneath. At first, Ian suggested tackling every third rose, reducing their height and training them back to their wire supports. 'In the end, we decided to just go for it and tackle them all at once,'





says Patrick. 'Ian's best bit of advice was that we needed to simplify the garden - removing some of the island beds to make the garden more suited to our lifestyle.'

Soon, Patrick and Han Yang were spending every spare moment in the 10 acres of garden. It is not hard to see why they fell in love with this 15th-century hall, with its ancient defensive moat. The house had a makeover in 1852 by the Norwich architect Thomas Jekyll, who rebuilt the south front and added the Elizabethan-style chimneys. Around this time, the moat was widened to



*As their confidence grew, Patrick and Han Yang introduced more bearded irises, delphiniums, tulips and peonies*

become almost lake-like on the south front. A lawned terrace was also added, and extends out over the water.

The moat had become badly silted and overgrown with reeds, and had lost that magical ability to reflect the house. One of the first things Patrick and Han Yang did was to

dredge it. The mud was piled up and turned into a raised viewing area - a chance to get a raised viewpoint over the moat and the house. This mound was then planted with a spiral of *Lonicera nitida*. 'We thought about box, but it takes so long, and *Lonicera* looks just as good when it's clipped,' says Patrick.

Elsing Hall has an unusual sloping walled garden with three brick walls, the fourth side being a medieval fish pond. Clearing some of the roses revealed beds and new planting opportunities. As their confidence grew, Patrick and Han Yang introduced more bearded irises, delphiniums, tulips and peonies, as well as camassias to fill the gap in May before the roses start to bloom. 'It has been about finding the plants that we like,' says Patrick. Within the walled garden, they →

**ABOVE** *Crambe cordifolia* and *Angelica archangelica* give height to a border of *Papaver orientale* 'Patty's Plum', foxgloves and pink-and-white *Salvia sclarea* var. *turkestaniana*. **BELOW LEFT** Old roses including 'Albertine' and 'Veilchenblau' climb the hall. **BELOW RIGHT** The moat has a rowboat and a landing stage.







**ABOVE** The front of the terrace, with an old rose, possibly *Rosa* 'Sophie's Perpetual', in the foreground, underplanted with *Campanula latifolia*.

**BELOW** Patrick and Han Yang have cut 64 yews to different heights to create a uniform effect in the formal garden.

→ have worked with the existing trees - the knarled old Bramley apples are hard pruned each year to retain their wonderful shapes, and the unusual decorative trees planted by the Cargills are treasured: a white Judas tree, a Japanese apricot, *Cornus mas*, albizia and *Parrotia persica*.

Beyond the walled garden, a stone arch, rescued by the Cargills from the Peterborough Corn Exchange, leads to an avenue of ginkgos, which turn buttery yellow in autumn.

Next door is the lime tunnel, which is cut back hard at the top each year to create the shape of a cathedral roof (rather than the usual pleaching method). This leads to the formal garden with its clipped yews. Always aware of vistas, the pair opened up new views by cutting through the established hedges, to offer glimpses of a sculpture or the sheep grazing beyond.

When they arrived at Elsing, Patrick and Han Yang could not have imagined the

gardening journey they would be making. Now, eight years on, they describe the garden as their 'main occupation'. 'Making a garden is like making a monumental sculpture that will sit in the landscape,' says Han Yang. 'Eventually, you just hope that you will end up with something that you are 100% satisfied with.'

In the centre of the walled garden stands an old and bent medlar tree which has almost disappeared under the growth of a 'Paul's Himalayan Musk' rose. When asked which plant will be sacrificed for the health of the other - the medlar or the rose - there is not a moment's hesitation. 'We'll keep the rose. It looks so amazing, even if it's just for two weeks a year.' The spirit of Elsing Hall and the fleeting summer moments that roses can bring are still working their magic.



**Elsing Hall Gardens, Hall Road, Elsing, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 3DX. Groups are welcome to visit by prior appointment between May and September. To book a visit (groups of 20 or more), call +44 (0)1362 637866. To find out more, visit [www.elsinghall.com](http://www.elsinghall.com)**



# Elsing Hall garden notebook



## A RIGHT RAMBLER

Choosing the right rose for the right position is vital. Here, a rambler called 'Francis E. Lester' has been planted to grow over the wooden arbour on the bridge. It is strong growing (to about 5m) but it not as rampant as 'Paul's Himalayan Musk'. A rambler is a good choice for an arbour, as the stems are flexible and can be trained over the roof.

## Tips from Han Yang & Patrick

- **When planting new roses**, we follow rose grower Peter Beales' advice - if you have to take out a rose and want to replant in the same place, dig all the soil out, put a cardboard box in the hole and then plant the new rose in the box, with new soil. We have had no problems with rose diseases so far.
- **Give roses a good layer of manure** every year - we use well-rotted horse manure from a local stable. We keep it for a year before use. It's a back-breaking job, but worth it.
- **Pull out pink or muddy-coloured foxgloves** if you want only the pure-white ones - they won't always come true, but it seems to stop some of the crossing between the pink and white ones.
- **Don't always assume things** you see in other gardens will work in your own garden - tree ferns, for example, might look wonderful in Cornwall, but the lack of rainfall and the cold drying winds of East Anglia will make it difficult for them to be happy.



## Garden challenges

**PESTS & PICK UP:**  
Rabbits and deer are an ongoing problem here, and mature trees such as poplars shed a vast amount of leaves in autumn, which must be collected.

## MARVELLOUS MOON

At the bottom of the walled garden, a new section of wall includes a moon gate - a traditional element in Chinese gardens. It has a practical purpose too, which is that the wooden shutters on either side can be closed at night to keep rabbits out of the garden.



## TAKING FLIGHT

Introducing a contemporary piece of art or sculpture can be an inspired move, even in a very traditional garden. In the centre of the formal yew garden, Rachael Long's metal ospreys have been raised up on a bare tree trunk so they can be viewed against the sky - adding a surprising vertical element. Find out more about Rachael's work at [www.rachaellong.net](http://www.rachaellong.net)



## ALSO IN THE AREA

**If you are visiting Elsing Hall, Patrick and Han Yang also recommend:**

- **GARDEN Houghton Hall** Has amazing artworks and Lord Cholmondeley and the team have created the most unbelievable walled garden. King's Lynn, Norfolk PE31 6UE. Tel: +44 (0)1485 528569. [www.houghtonhall.com](http://www.houghtonhall.com)
- **GARDEN Blickling Hall** A favourite Norfolk garden. Blickling, Aylsham, Norfolk NR11 6NF. Tel: +44 (0)1263 738030. [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)
- **GARDEN East Ruston Old Vicarage** Exciting use of exotic planting. East Ruston, Norwich, Norfolk NR12 9HN. Tel: +44 (0)1692 650432. [www.e-ruston-oldvicaragegardens.co.uk](http://www.e-ruston-oldvicaragegardens.co.uk)
- **HIDDEN GEM The Bishop's House Gardens in Norwich** 'The gardener has given us lots of good advice,' says Patrick. Open on select days for charity. Norwich, Norfolk NR3 1SB. Tel: +44 (0)1603 880853. [www.dioceseofnorwich.org/about/bishops/norwich/gardens/](http://www.dioceseofnorwich.org/about/bishops/norwich/gardens/)
- **ROSES Peter Beales** London Road, Attleborough, Norfolk NR17 1AY. Tel: +44 (0)1953 454707. [www.classicroses.co.uk](http://www.classicroses.co.uk)



Langwell is a two-acre garden with a wet, cold and windy climate. The growing season is short and the planting is continually evolving - turn over for some of the most recent planting schemes.

# Hidden TREASURE

Concealed behind high walls and surrounded by a wild Highland landscape, Langwell garden is an intimate, colourful oasis →

PHOTOGRAPHS RAY COX | WORDS VERONICA PEERLESS







**RIGHT** The herb garden consists of eight raised beds filled with culinary herbs including rosemary, thyme and chives. The lavender is

*Lavandula angustifolia* 'Hidcote'. **BELOW** The pool is fed by natural spring water piped from the Scaraben hills; it then flows out of the pond back into the nearby river. The beds opposite contain *Perovskia atriplicifolia* 'Blue Spire' and are edged by *Sedum spectabile* 'Brilliant'.

**OPPOSITE** Plants are planted in bold clumps so that the garden is not dwarfed by the surrounding moorland landscape.

**C**aithness, in the most northerly part of Scotland, is known for its spectacular open landscapes, enjoyed by visitors who come to hunt, shoot and fish. It's also known for its wild, wet and windy climate of contrasts. Winters come early and are cold and long, with only a few hours of daylight. Summers, though short, have many hours of daylight, with only an hour of two of semi-darkness.

Gardening here is definitely a challenge, which is why visitors to Langwell, situated on a south-facing slope of the Langwell Strath, are charmed by this colourful garden behind 60m walls. The garden is part of the 52,000-acre Langwell and Braemore estate, purchased by the Duke of Portland in 1857 and still in family ownership today. In the 19th century, the garden was used to grow fruit and vegetables for the household. In the early 20th century, it was laid out in a cruciform design, and the impressive borders planted. The fruit and veg-growing areas were concealed behind the yew hedges.

Although the garden is large (just over two acres), it is dwarfed by the surrounding moorland landscape. To harmonise the scale and to minimise wind damage, large plants are densely planted in bold clumps. The borders are designed to be at their peak from August onwards, but this is totally weather dependent. 'A cold late spring or a hot spell in June and July will thwart this,' says head gardener Peter Meredith.



On average, plants at Langwell begin to 'break' six weeks later than in the more temperate parts of Britain; bluebells in June are one of the charms of the far north. The long daylight hours then create a growth spurt that enables plants to catch up. This prodigious growth, along with the strong Caithness winds, mean that even the most unlikely of herbaceous perennials need staking. The herbaceous borders are cut down in November, as the garden is often frosted or under snow after that.

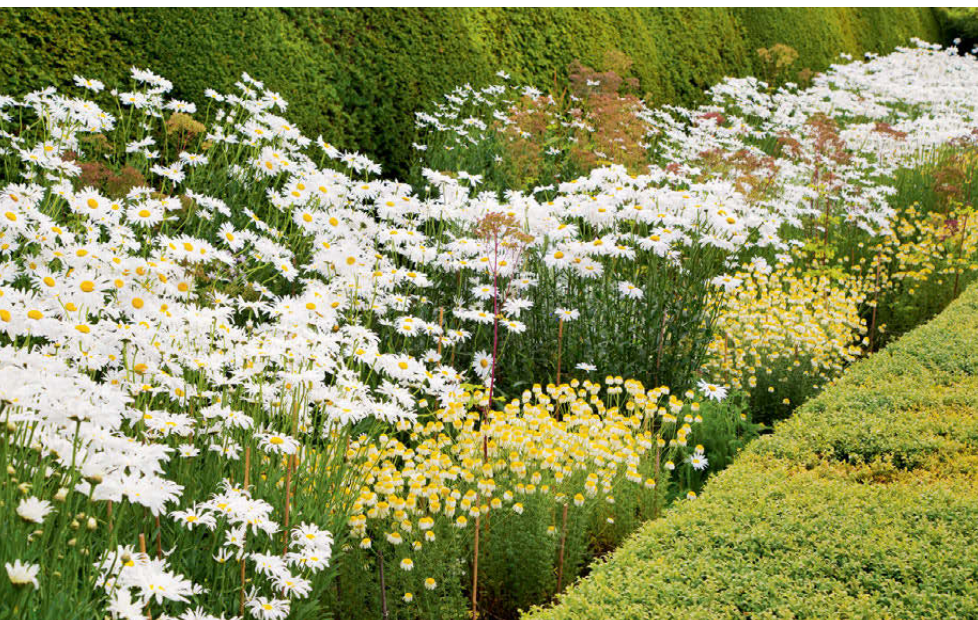
Peter describes the garden as 'managed but informal'. There is no attempt at a colour scheme, but repetitions of plants such as *Filipendula rubra*, *Agapanthus campanulatus*, *Sidalcea* 'Loveliness', astilbes, *Dierama* →











**ABOVE** The daisy border, → *pulcherrimum*, echinops, *Gentiana asclepiadea* and home to three varieties of *Anthemis tinctoria* ('Alba', 'E.C. Buxton' and 'Beauty of Grallagh') plus *Leucanthemum x superbum* and two cultivars, 'Becky' and 'Snowcap'. **RIGHT** The bold planting includes *Crocsmia* 'Lucifer', *Filipendula rubra* 'Venusta', *Persicaria amplexicaulis* 'Firetail' and *Lythrum salicaria*. The door is a covered entrance into the garden with two benches inside. A favourite seating area to enjoy the view across the garden and the landscape beyond.

→ *pulcherrimum*, echinops, *Gentiana asclepiadea* and *Nepeta* 'Six Hills Giant' give continuity.

In the 40 years that he has been gardening, Peter has come to know what will grow on exposed sites. '*Rosa rugosa* does well in the most inhospitable of places. Tree lupins are reliable, and flower virtually throughout the season if split regularly and deadheaded, and monarda seems to do well too. While some hemerocallis are disappointing in the climate of the far north, *H. 'White Temptation'* does surprisingly well, flowering from July until September.'

Approximately a third of the garden is given over to fruit and vegetables, grown in cleverly concealed, yew-edged compartments. Apples, pears and plums adorn the walls, tomatoes are grown in the greenhouse, and beans and courgettes are grown in a polytunnel. The soil is acidic, light and free-draining, so needs regular liming and manuring. The garden is mainly organic; herbicides are only used on the gravel paths to hold back 'the ever-present moss' of the far north of Scotland. Peter says the garden is relatively untroubled by pests - the high walls keep the deer out, and an abundance of toads, frogs and newts in the ponds mean slugs are rarely a problem.

A sense of the surrounding moorland remains strong, however. Seasons are heralded by the sounds of arriving or departing geese, the hammering of the great spotted woodpecker, the chatter of swallows and house martins, the call of the cuckoo and the roar of rutting deer. 'Visitors to the garden love the surprise of finding an intimate and informal garden hidden behind the walls in this remote location,' says Peter. 'It's a garden oasis.'

**Langwell, Welbeck Estates, Berriedale KW7 6HD. The garden is open on Sunday 26 July, 1-5pm, for Scotland's Gardens ([www.scotlandsgardens.org](http://www.scotlandsgardens.org)) and also by appointment. Tel: +44 (0)1593 751237.**

Top tips for exposed gardens →









# Langwell garden notebook



## TAKE A SEAT

This pergola, covering a bench, was made from timber from HMS Arethusa, which took part in the Crimean War. It is covered in honeysuckle and clematis.



## BOXED IN

Box-edged beds are home to annual planting - here they are filled with *Echium vulgare* 'Blue Bedder'. In the foreground is *Nepeta* 'Six Hills Giant'.

## ALSO IN THE AREA

If you are visiting Langwell, you could also visit:

### ● GARDEN Castle and Gardens of Mey

The summer retreat of the late Queen Mother. She oversaw the restoration of the gardens, and some of her favourite plants remain. Thurso, Caithness, Scotland KW14 8XH. Tel: +44 (0)1847 851473. [www.castleofmey.org.uk](http://www.castleofmey.org.uk)

### ● GARDEN Dunrobin Castle

Victorian gardens laid out by the architect Sir Charles Barry, inspired by the palace of Versailles in Paris. Golspie, Sutherland KW10 6SF. Tel: +44 (0)1408 633177. [www.dunrobincastle.co.uk](http://www.dunrobincastle.co.uk)

### ● GARDEN Dunbeath Castle

Long, mirror-planted herbaceous borders. Dunbeath, Caithness KW6 6ED.

Tel: +44 (0)1593 731308. [www.dunbeath.co.uk](http://www.dunbeath.co.uk)

### ● HOTEL Navidale House Hotel

A former hunting lodge to the Dukes of Sutherland, now a country house hotel, set in private woodland. Navidale, near Helmsdale, Sutherland KW8 6JS. Tel: +44 (0)1431 821258. [www.navidalehousehotel.co.uk](http://www.navidalehousehotel.co.uk)

## CUTTING HEDGE

July and August are often the only two frost-free months at Langwell, and this is when the hedges - adding up to more than 1km in length in total - are trimmed. They are made up mostly of yew and box, with some privet and cotoneaster. The yew is cut in August so that any nesting birds will have moved on.



## Garden challenges

**CLIMATE:** The biggest challenge in this northerly region is the weather. 'The garden can look beautiful one day, but the next, after a Caithness storm, it can be a horizontal herbaceous artwork,' says Peter.

## Peter's top exposed garden tips

- **Get to know your garden** - soil, orientation, climate. These factors will determine which plants will be successful. You may have multiple soil types, damp areas, hot spots etc.
- **Careful preparation is key.** Cultivate, mulch or improve soil as appropriate for its type and what you will be planting.
- **Find out the ultimate size of each plant.** If you have shrubs that will become large, plant at their ultimate spacing and underplant with groundcover of your choice. The groundcover will die out as the shrubs fill in, leaving you with healthy and robust long-term planting.
- **Plant small.** Within a few years, small healthy plants will outgrow plants that are planted at a more mature stage, and will be stronger and establish much better.
- **If in doubt, buy one plant** and grow it on for a year and see how it does. Most perennials enjoy being split, and will provide you and your friends with free plants.







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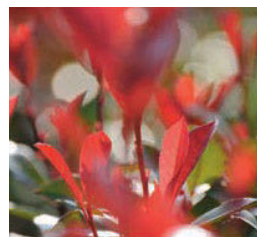
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# NATURAL BEAUTY

Garden designer **Dominick Murphy** suggests three design choices that will make your garden more eco-friendly



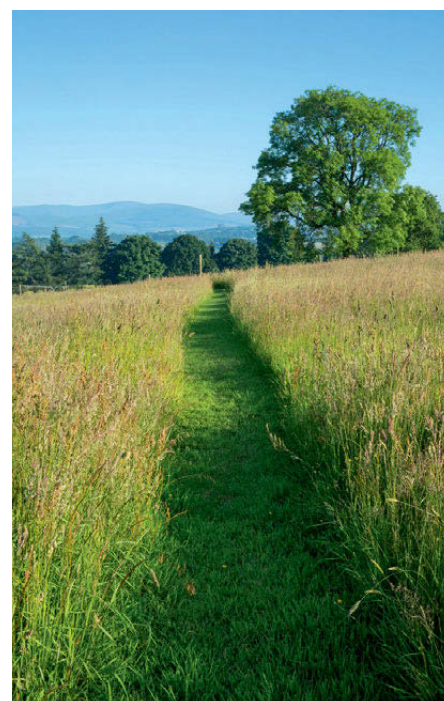
## WOODLAND

Uncultivated landscapes are often a great source of inspiration. Nature has an amazing capacity for recovery and self-sufficiency. When a derelict site is left to nature, it quickly returns to wildflowers when left untouched. These plants re-establish in layers, creating the conditions they need to flourish. In a lot of our garden designs, we try to incorporate this concept by planting small to medium trees to give a sense of verticality and provide shelter for an understorey of lower trees and medium-sized shrubs. Within these shaded spaces, we love to plant ferns or smaller ground-covering shrubs. To give sporadic interest, we plant different types of shade-hardy seasonal bulbs.



## POND

Nowadays, sustainable drainage systems have become very popular with the environmentally conscious gardener. Ponds are a great solution to issues of drainage, as they provide a perfect location for a garden's surface water run-off, and become essential water sources in dry periods. On one project, we let water from hard surfaces overflow into the pond via a meandering stream. The pond slowly recharges the groundwater levels, while also providing sustenance for the garden in dry spells. We chose plants like *Iris pseudacorus*, *Rodgersia aesculifolia* and a variety of willow species too (above, with *Iris laevigata* 'Mottled Beauty'). These plants add an attractive aesthetic while naturally filtering the water.



## MEADOW

Sustainable gardening interprets natural processes and re-appropriates them for use in the modern garden. Despite its importance for many gardeners, constant mowing and manicuring of lawns can leave a heavy carbon footprint. Meadows, in the right settings, can be equally as attractive as cut lawns, and can add nuance and character to a garden. Meadows also have the advantages of low maintenance and cost. The application of fertilisers and pesticides becomes frivolous in the maintenance of a meadow. Often, we make a feature of the meadow by intersecting the space area with paths (above). The paths work to frame the beauty of this naturally occurring feature.





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# PRIVATE VIEW

PHOTOGRAPHS NICOLA STOCKEN | WORDS DEBORAH CURTIS

The imaginative redesign of this Surrey courtyard garden proves that with creative use of space and flexible planting, small can be very beautiful indeed

When garden designer Nic Howard first laid eyes on the diminutive courtyard at Little Orchard in Outwood, Surrey, it wasn't difficult to see why it had put off other potential buyers. It was a dark, awkwardly shaped triangular space which was almost entirely covered with crazy paving, apart from a 30cm-wide border around the edge. What stopped Nic in his tracks, though, was the beautiful 100-year-old brick wall which ran along one side. 'The plants were mostly overgrown roses and hardy wallflowers,' he says, 'and it →





→ was just the gloomiest space you could imagine, but it had that lovely wall, and that's the first thing I saw. I thought it was just amazing.'

It was four years ago that Nic bought the Edwardian house where he now lives with his partner, Derek Brewster, and their 13-year-old Beagle, Harry; and once the renovations inside were complete, he set about transforming the garden.

Out came the crazy paving, and every single plant fell under Nic's sword, apart from a white-flowering camellia and a broad-leaved ivy, which were spared. At the front of the house, another section of wall with a pretty doorway was built to match the original section, so that the courtyard is now completely enclosed.

The 11m x 6m area is now paved with Kotah blue limestone, which Nic laid square to the house to increase the sense of space in the garden.

'There are really nice dynamic lines across the garden taking in the diagonal,' he says, 'and now that the borders are full

of plants, you are unaware of the irregular shape.'

The soil in the garden is a heavy, neutral-to-acidic clay, which was back-breaking work to improve. 'It is thick, yellow clay that was horrific to work,' says Nic. 'I added loads of organic matter, and now I can dig at least 30cm - it's fantastic. The plants absolutely love it.'

The borders are a voluminous mix of permanent residents and temporary visitors, and Nic also has a number of plants in pots, including an acer and a blueberry, which he regularly rearranges to keep things fresh.

'In a small garden, the plants have to work really hard to give you interest,' Nic says, 'and that's why all the permanent plants like the hakonechloa, the rodgersia, and even the camellia, have all got to look good green. And then I plug the gaps. I'm always taking plants out, and adding bits and pieces. I wish I could leave well enough alone, but when your garden is tiny, you want to keep reinventing the space.'

*'Now that the borders are full of plants, you are unaware of the irregular shape'*



#### ▲ CENTRE STAGE

The table and chairs form the garden's centrepiece, with an antique mirror behind. Grasses including *Anemanthele lessoniana* and *Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola' intermingle with hostas and *Rodgersia pinnata*, while *Digitalis purpurea* 'Alba', *Erysimum* 'Bowles's Mauve', *Geranium* 'Brookside' and *Penstemon* 'Garnet' punctuate the shades of green. Climbers include *Rosa Iceberg*, and Nic has chosen winter-flowering cherry *Prunus x subhirtella* 'Autumnalis Rosea' as a specimen tree.

#### ◀ KERB APPEAL

At the front of the house, there are a collection of planters containing *Fuchsia* 'Sunray', pink cosmos, *Salvia* 'Black Knight' and the pelargonium Orbit Synchro Hot Pink, while *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle' leads the eye towards the courtyard.







#### ► SELF-CONTAINED

An old wash tub, which Nic found at Ardingly International Antiques & Collectors Fair, creates an interesting water feature and keeps mare's tail, *Equisetum arvense*, under control. 'It's unruly in the garden unless contained,' he says. Broad-leaved *Hosta* 'Sum and Substance' makes a striking contrast.



#### ◄ HARRY'S GAME

Harry the beagle enjoys sunning himself in the garden. In ornamental brackets on the wall behind is some artificial Ikea greenery in two Victorian pots. 'I tried so many different things, and nothing lived, so I thought, right, I'm going artificial... you just wouldn't know they aren't real,' says Nic. →





DESIGNER PROFILE

**NIC HOWARD** (with his partner Derek Brewster, right) took a degree in landscape and garden design at Writtle College in Essex before working for garden designer Fiona Lawrenson. In 2000, he went freelance, setting up his own design consultancy We Love Plants, which is based in Surrey. Nic combines contemporary design solutions with soft, cottage-style planting that favours a relaxed and easy style. He enjoys grouping herbaceous plants with grasses to create fresh and exciting schemes that have an emphasis on texture, colour and year-round interest.  
[www.we-love-plants.co.uk](http://www.we-love-plants.co.uk)  
[www.botanicalcushions.com](http://www.botanicalcushions.com)





*Nic has amassed a wonderful collection of Victoriana over the years*

#### DESIGN DETAILS



#### ▲ CORNER COLLECTION

Nic has amassed a wonderful collection of Victoriana over the years, which he has grouped together in the garden to great effect. He uses everything from an old wooden barrel and water pump to wire baskets and watering cans to set the scene. Plants in this corner include *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Phantom', *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Gracillimus', *Hosta* 'Big Daddy', *Eucalyptus pauciflora* subsp. *niphophila* and *Muehlenbeckia complexa*. Nic's partner, Derek, found the bench online.



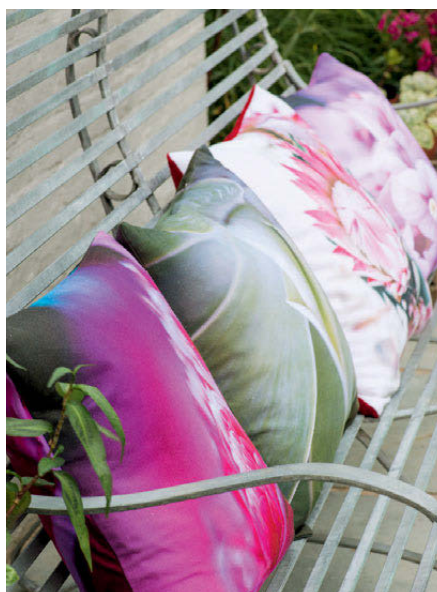
#### HANGING AROUND

Nic found this round wash tub at a car boot sale. Even when his finds are empty of plants, they still look great displayed around the garden.



#### BACK TO BLACK

The mirror hangs on a newer wall that Nic painted black to reduce its visual impact. It is the perfect backdrop for *Rosa Iceberg* and *Verbena bonariensis* 'Lollipop'.



#### COMFORT ZONE

Cushions from Derek's new venture Botanical Cushions add a touch of luxury to the Victorian reproduction bench from Drummonds architectural antiques.



#### INSIDE STORY

Everything Nic has collected has a story to tell. The tiny hanging gnome was a present from a client. 'Stuff like this makes the garden a very personal space,' he says. ♦



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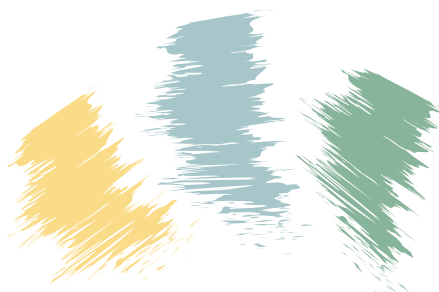
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# Sitting PRETTY

With lots of garden furniture on the market, we help you narrow down your search to find your dream set

**WORDS** VICTORIA MASON

**W**hen choosing new garden furniture, it is all about you and your garden - you can transform your outdoor space with the right piece.

With countless options available, you'll be spoilt for choice, but whatever you choose, there are some elements to consider before you buy.

## FIRST THINGS FIRST

Start off by researching designs. Look on Pinterest, retailers' websites and visit showrooms to get an idea of what you like. Measure the space available in your garden. A large banquet-style table and chairs is fine in a large space, but a circular set would be more suitable for a small terrace. It is essential that your furniture is placed on a solid, even surface, and orientated in the most appropriate location to make the best of any views. Check that there's enough room for additional guests if needed. Think about what you need the furniture for - eating al fresco, sunbathing, reading the paper with a coffee.

The style of your home will influence whether you go traditional or contemporary. You can choose a classic teak dining set, luxurious rattan loungers, chic bistro sets ideal for balconies, or swing seats and hammocks in the trees.

If you're thinking of being eco-friendly and would prefer a wooden garden set, look out for FSC-certified wood. This is wood that is certified under the standards set by the Forest Stewardship Council. The FSC label on wood or paper products guarantees that consumers can trust the →

**TOP** Entertain guests at a long table like this from Gaze Burvill. **BELOW, FROM LEFT** Sitting Spiritually creates bespoke swing seats; check the weight to ensure the tree is able to hold your swing, like this one from Go Modern; Garpa designs modern loungers; a classic bench.



IMAGES/BENCH - GAPA/CAROLE DRAKE









**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** Ensure your table has a hole in the middle for a parasol (from John Lewis); garden sofa sets like this from Oxleys are popular; removable cushions are handy to wash and store (from Garden Trading); metal chairs, like these from Marston & Langinger, are smart but can get hot in the sun; deckchairs are great for small gardens as they fold up.

→ source. You could also consider reclaimed timber, which is wood that has been salvaged for re-use in another form, and could save you money.

### MAINTENANCE MATTERS

Will the furniture be left outside all year? If so, consider what maintenance is required. Hardwood furniture, such as teak, is the most durable and contains high levels of natural oils. This makes it weather resistant, so it can be left out over winter. The only maintenance required is washing once a year using a brush and soapy water. Tilting furniture and keeping the feet off wet ground while not in use will also prevent it from rotting.

Softwood furniture, such as pine, can be treated with a wood stain or paint containing a preservative; while metal furniture is low maintenance and can endure all weathers - but check for rust. Treat any damage with rust-preventing paint after removing loose material. Joints and fixings may need oiling to allow free movement. Rattan is easy to move and has a weave design that won't unravel or fray. The colour can eventually fade with time, and it will need to be covered or put away in winter.

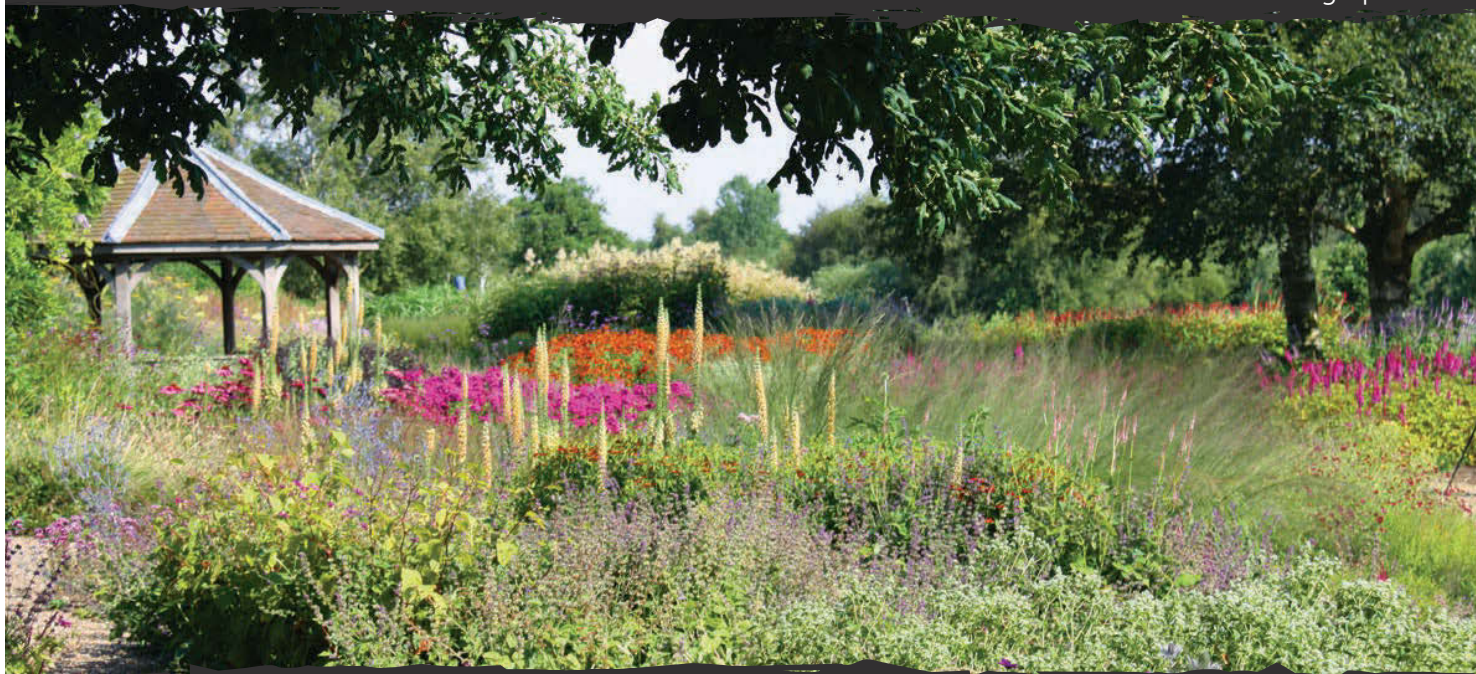
Why not think outside the box, and create a unique custom piece with a craftsman? Perhaps you would like a personal inscription, or a table with a hole in the middle for ice buckets or pots of plants. How about making a chair out of a fallen tree, or designing something fresh that has personal meaning to you? The sky is the limit. ♦





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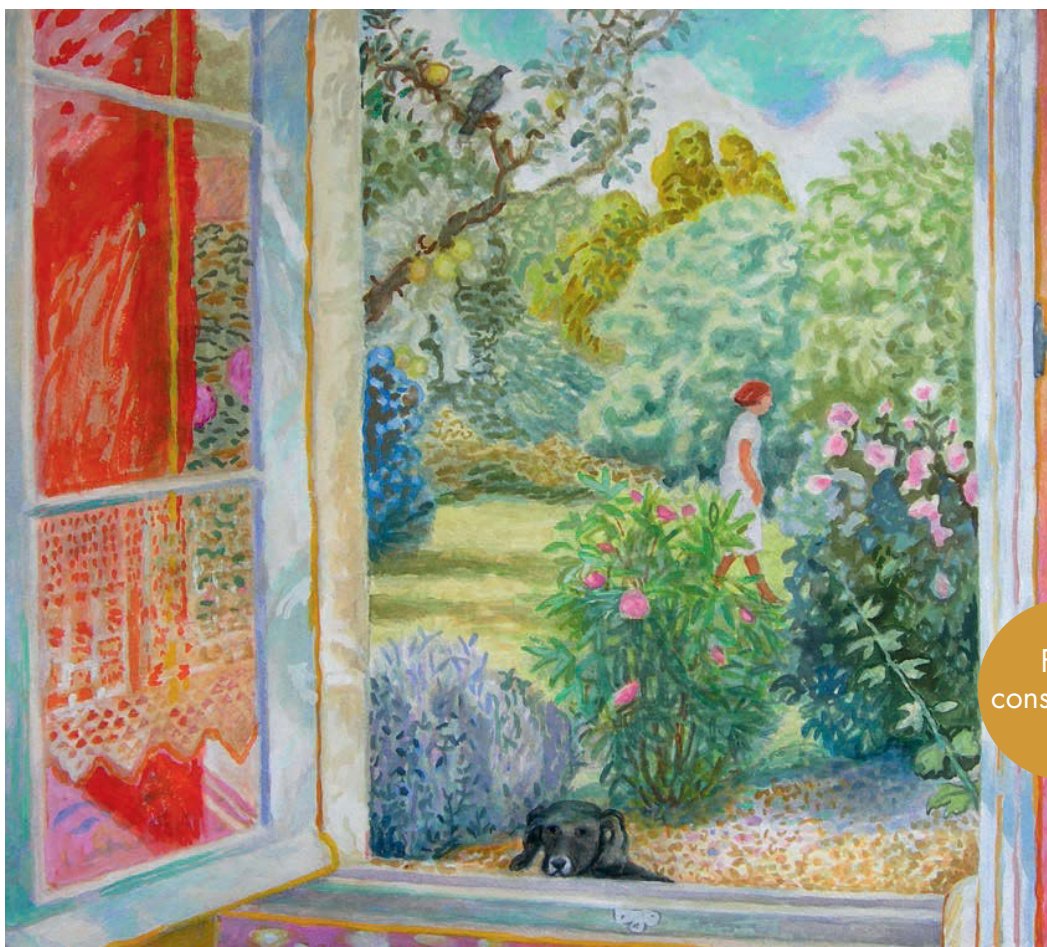
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Image: June Berry NEAC, *August Afternoon*





# Growing gains

**Claire Austin** grows herbaceous perennials at her award-winning nursery, which she has run for more than 30 years

My father, David Austin, had a collection of irises and peonies that he gathered from all over the world. After his English Roses Mary Rose and Graham Thomas hit the press, roses became a growing trend, so my father needed to expand. I had just finished art school, and took over the perennials side of the business in 1983. I never trained - I just learnt on the job. It was a long apprenticeship!

We are a small team of three and multi-task on everything from potting up and weeding to packing orders. The nursery covers 10 acres, shared with sheep, pigs and hens. It was my parents' weekend home, but after my mother died, my father no longer wanted to stay, so I moved in.

We have more than 500 varieties of irises, and sell around 100, depending on stock. I like irises with 'plicate' patterning - a colour stitched or stippled over the petals, such as *Iris* 'Drama Queen'. I also really love persicarias, sanguisorbas and astrantias at the moment.

The best part of my job is buying the plants - it's like going shopping! The stock comes from lots of sources, with new varieties largely from America, ranging from barerooted plants and plugs to plants in 9cm pots.

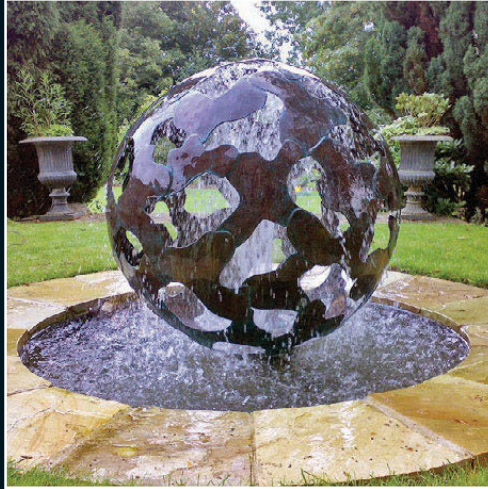
Our display garden is larger than most, and is open to visitors on special days in summer. It's a country garden divided into four large square beds with a mixture of perennials. We also have borders of peonies and a new one just for irises.

I really enjoy growing and photography. Everyday I look around the garden and see if there's anything to photograph - I like to plant in combinations, so it's great to see how they turn out in images.

This is not a standard nine-to-five job. My advice for someone starting a nursery is work hard, be passionate and talk to other growers. Go to gardens, visit gardens - just get involved... and never think you're going to earn any money! ♦



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# PLANTING *perfection*

The sweeping double borders of the Millenium Garden at Castle Hill  
in Devon were a triumph for designer Xa Tollemache →

PHOTOGRAPHS CAROLE DRAKE | WORDS STEPHANIE MAHON





Before its redesign, the area in front of the house at Castle Hill in Devon had a great lawn with a swimming pool and a thin, narrow border that curved towards the property. Nell, Lady Arran, wanted to create a summer garden here that could rival the spring woodland garden, so she called in her friend and garden designer Xa, Lady Tollemache.

‘I went out into the garden and did sketches of what it might look like,’ explains Xa. ‘I felt that the border coming in towards the house was contrary to the natural flow of the garden, and was completely wrong. I wanted to sweep it away in an arc and create a big floral ‘shoulder’ moving away from the house.’

The estate is a Grade-I listed park, so it was important to create a garden that had the strength to come against the house, but not dominate the landscape. ‘It had to have strong enough features to dictate a nice design and line without taking away from the bigger picture.’

When Xa had done her initial drawings, Nell showed her an old painting of the garden showing the original planting of trees in exactly the same movement that Xa had sketched. ‘It was obviously meant to be!’ she says. ‘It was just the energy, how the contours showed me what I felt would be right. I told Nell I would only do the garden for her if she filled in the swimming pool and

**ABOVE** The herbaceous perennials used were ‘chosen largely to keep a soft palette of creams, whites, silver, lilacs and blues,’ explains Nell, Lady Arran, ‘which read so well against the house. Pale pinks and dark red are good too.’ The season starts with bulbs and aquilegias, then peonies and roses, with a summer show of favourites such as phlox, *Campanula lactiflora* ‘Pritchard’s Variety’, daylilies, *Persicaria polymorpha*, *Verbena bonariensis*, agapanthus and sedums. Extra height is offered by clematis including ‘Perle D’Azur’ and ‘Polish Spirit’ on supports Xa designed for her own garden.

torched the little wooden hut beside it. So she threw the hut into the pool and filled it in! Then I started work.’

As inspiration for the structural planting, Xa chose a magnificent *Quercus ilex* growing at the bottom of the garden. She picked specimens of this tree, known as holm oak, as punctuation marks for the scheme, and had them clipped into domed trees to echo the copper domes of the house, creating a link by tying them into the park and the architecture.

Another striking feature of the sweeping double borders is the edging of lavender that flows down the space. ‘I thought in a mad moment that we should edge with lavender,’ explains Xa, ‘which was crazy, in Devon →







**ABOVE** The domes of the house are reflected in the domed shape of the clipped *Quercus ilex* that form the backbone of the borders, sweeping away from the house in an arcing line. Rows of *Lavandula x intermedia* 'Grosso' form the front edging along the path. Xa also used dark-leaved dahlias such as 'Twynning's After Eight', sweet Williams, *Echinacea* 'Ruby Giant', salvias, achillea and echinops in the planting scheme. Nell feels Xa has reinterpreted a design that was actually in place here in 1730, which had curving avenues of elms, but 'made it far more interesting, besides respecting the 18th-century structure'.

**LEFT** At the top of the borders, by the house, are low box-edged beds that give a clear view of the curving shape of the scheme. These beds contain annuals such as *Nicotiana sylvestris* and cosmos, and perennials including leucanthemum daisies and veronicastrum. They are backed by another row of lavender. A larger pair of clipped *Quercus ilex* in the lawn repeat the shaped specimens along the border, and offer a counterpoint to the Giles Rayner water sculpture.



→ with 45in of rain. But there is a lavender called 'Grosso' that is more wet tolerant and keeps its grey colour, so I used it in double row on either side. It did so well in the first few years that we took one row out. Nell still has a problem losing them, especially at the bottom where it is dampest, but it's such a feature of the garden that she keeps taking cuttings and replacing them.'

Within the borders, there is a mix of shrubs, perennials and annuals. At first, Xa used shrubs like escallonias and hebes, but 'they grew like topsy, and soon got top heavy, so we took them out'. They decided to add more silver weeping pears to the scheme to soften the planting and give height and lightness. While they are waiting for them to grow in, Nell and head gardener Louisa are growing annuals such as nicotiana to fill gaps. 'The garden is open into autumn, so the annuals provide that extra flowering season. It is time consuming to grow them, but once they are in, they make the garden zing from late summer to autumn,' says Xa. The Millenium Garden, as this space is now called, has given Castle Hill a summer garden to follow the spring woodland garden, and 'reads perfectly against the house from all directions,' says Nell. 'We love it.'

**Castle Hill, Filleigh, Barnstaple, Devon EX32 0RH. Open all year - see [www.castlehilldevon.co.uk](http://www.castlehilldevon.co.uk) See more of Xa's work at [www.xa-tollemache.co.uk](http://www.xa-tollemache.co.uk)**



**ABOVE** The line of the garden is dictated by the *Quercus ilex* trees, and Xa also reinforced their presence with an under-hedge of clipped *Osmanthus x burkwoodii* that circles around each trunk. This backbone to the curving double borders gives onto the great lawn and wraps around the magnificent cedar (see pg 69).

## Lady Arran's favourite border plants

Nell loves the scheme Xa created for her, and picks out four particular plants that work well together in the colour palette and can withstand the Devon climate.



***Veronicastrum virginicum* 'Album'** is a hardy perennial with sculptural, whorled foliage, from which emerges tall flower spikes of white flowers from June to September. Will grow in most soils in full sun or part shade. Grows to 1.2m in height, with a spread of 50cm.



***Penstemon heterophyllus* 'Heavenly Blue'** is a long-flowering variety that is great for attracting bees and butterflies. Likes a well-drained soil in full sun or part shade. Makes an excellent cut flower. Grows to a height of 80cm with a spread of 50cm.



***Romneya coulteri***, also known as the Californian tree poppy, has a powerful scent and a spreading habit. With glaucous grey-green leaves and large poppy-like flowers, it creates a display from July to September. Hardy down to -10°C. Grows to a height of up to 2.5m.



***Perovskia* 'Blue Spire'** has whitish-grey stems and grey foliage with mauve-blue flower spikes in late summer. Good for coastal gardens, but may require support in windy areas. Plant in full sun in well-drained soil. Grows to a height and spread of 75cm.



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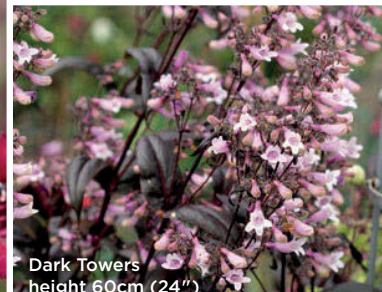
**Westminster Belle**  
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# SUMMER BOUNTY

**Tamsin Westhorpe** picks a fruit feast and celebrates the warm weather and bright blooms at the magazine's home garden, Stockton Bury

PHOTOGRAPHS JOHN CAMPBELL

There is no better feeling than harvesting home-grown produce from the garden, and July offers plenty of opportunities. Our fruit frame is situated against a south-facing wall and is home to cherries, kiwis, apricots, loganberries, gooseberries, blackcurrants, raspberries and strawberries. It isn't easy to eat this quantity of fruit while it is fresh, so we get busy making jam and the freezer is put to good use.

The July garden is a confident one, with bright colours. It's the tall plants at the middle and back of the borders that grab our attention. The stately *Eucomis pole-evansii*, with lime-green flowers that resemble pineapples, is always a talking point with visitors. That, coupled with the fiery flowers from *Crocasmia* 'Lucifer' or *Crocasmia* 'Emily McKenzie', makes for an

impressive combination. Another orange with punch is *Helenium* 'Sahin's Early Flowerer' - the bees love these easy-to-access flowers. The two strongest yellows in the garden are solidago and, at the back of the border, meeting you at head height, the impressive *Rudbeckia laciniata* 'Herbstsonne'. This plant thrives in the Herefordshire clay soil. The veratrum that have, up until now, been admired for their foliage are soon offering architectural flower spikes - white courtesy of *V. album* and chocolate-brown from *V. nigrum*.

It's exciting to see lots of bees and butterflies around. The low-growing *Origanum vulgare*, which lives at the foot of our south-facing wall, is a magnet for both. The Red Admiral butterfly is a regular visitor, as are the newly emerged adults of the stunning Peacock butterfly. They add something special to the garden. →

**ABOVE** Tamsin picks berries and currants in the fruit frame with her mother, sister and friend - harvesting is a family affair. Jam-making with the bounty follows in the afternoon.



## TOP TASKS

### For more fruit

**RIGHT** A leaky pipe hose is a great way of watering strawberry beds. **FAR RIGHT** Prune summer fruiting raspberries this month. **BELOW** It's a good time to summer prune apple and other fruit trees.

Few gardeners ever regret building or investing in a fruit frame. Creating a bird-free haven for your fruit certainly pays off. In our garden, it is a place where the sun bounces off the red brick wall and the fruiting plants enjoy the fertile clay soil.

When planning a fruit frame, make sure you allow room for fruit-picking stools and space to harvest - getting caught on the raspberries is a sure-fire way to put you off what's meant to be a relaxing task.

The strawberries are first to be picked, and to keep plants going in such a hot spot, a leaky pipe is used on occasion to drip-feed them with water. Our strawberry plants are now about four years old, so next year we plan to replace them to encourage an even larger harvest. I will order them in February for planting as bareroot plants in March.

Once your summer raspberry crop has been harvested, it is time to prune them. The fruits are produced on year-old canes, so these can now be pruned right down to ground level. Select up to eight new stems to train into the support, and then cut the less-vigorous new stems right back to the ground. You are simply replacing old for new. Autumn-fruiting types do not require pruning until February, when the whole plant is cut back to ground level. Unlike their summer-fruiting relatives, they produce fruit on the current season's growth.



Gooseberries and red and white currants also require pruning now. As fruit is produced on old wood, when you cut the current season's growth back to five leaves, you should not be removing this year's fruit. When pruning gooseberries, I recommend leather gloves!

Our dwarf apple trees also need a summer prune. Winter pruning is focused on growth, but summer pruning is done to make sure you get a really great crop next year. Pruning your apple and other fruit trees in this way will make sure you don't have lots of leggy growth with no fruit. It's easy, quick and you'll get a bumper crop next season. To find out how to prune your apple trees in summer, go to the Videos section of [www.theenglishgarden.co.uk](http://www.theenglishgarden.co.uk) and watch our short step-by-step film showing you what to do.





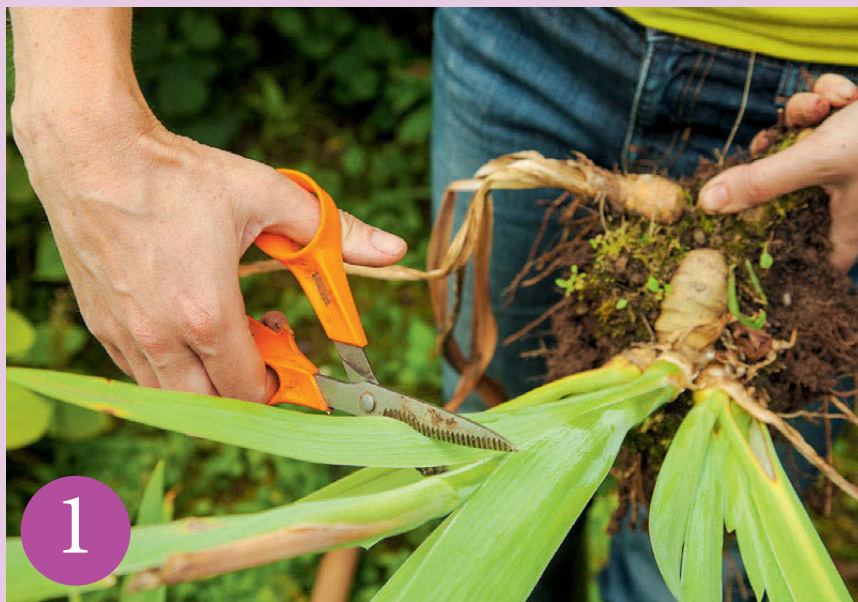


Time to  
harvest  
garlic

This year, I have grown the popular 'Solent Wight' garlic, a softneck type that has no flower spikes. In a mini experiment, I planted some before Christmas and some in February. The results were pretty similar, so I am not swung either way on a preferred planting time. However, if growing hardneck types, autumn planting seems to prove beneficial. Most garlic, whenever planted, should be ready to harvest this month. When the lower leaves start to turn yellow, they are ready to lift, dry and store. Always buy from a grower - supermarket cloves may carry disease.

## PROPAGATION STATION

### Dividing irises



After my visit to this year's RHS Chelsea Flower Show, I am even more excited by bearded irises. Grower Claire Austin's return to the Great Pavilion and her stunning display has certainly inspired me to try a few more varieties. The almost chocolate-brown 'Drama Queen' is now definitely on my must-have list after it was highly recommended by Claire (see pg 67). I was also taken with soft-purple 'Annabel Jane' and almost-black 'Before the Storm', as featured in her recent book *Claire Austin's Book Of Perennials*. Traditionally, irises are planted six weeks after flowering, so this is the month to invest in new plants.

To make the most of the existing irises in the garden, now is a good time to divide them. Very mature irises that have not flowered well are prime for division.

1. Gently lift the plant from the soil with a border fork, then cut back the foliage by half with garden scissors. This prevents the plant from toppling in the wind.
2. Study the rhizome of the plant, and with a sharp, clean knife, cut off any dead or damaged parts. Once you have done this, cut off a section with a healthy eye to form the new plant. You may find that the very centre of the plant is past saving.
3. Replant the sections in a sunny, south-facing spot. Don't be tempted to completely cover the rhizome with soil, as it will benefit from the warmth of the sun. Water in and wait for the plants to have a new lease of life, and plenty of flowers next year. →







## IN DEPTH

### Summer pond care

The ponds and streams in the garden are now almost completely disguised by the flamboyant foliage of aquatic plants. Pond weeds will still be putting on very active growth, so if you can find a steady rock to stand on to remove the weeds, do so. I lightly rake the weed from the pond - keeping the tines well away from the liner to avoid making a hole.

The pond weed is then left in a pile by the pond for 24 hours to let the all the little insects, frogs and other inhabitants of the pond scurry back to their watery home.

If I can safely reach any dead or dying foliage in the pond, I will, but the majority will be left to clear once the surrounding marginals have been cut back. Do not work near a pond on your own - they are hazardous, so take precautions. The waterlily foliage is quite impressive now, as it reaches its maximum size for the year. It creates fantastic cool hiding places for fish on hot days.

We keep an eye on the water features and ponds, and if the water levels drop, we make sure to top them up - unless we have a hosepipe ban.



**OPPOSITE** Be careful when using a rake to remove pond weed - don't catch the liner.

**ABOVE** Remove dead leaves on waterlilies if possible. Be careful when working around the water, and always make sure to have someone with you.



### Flowers of the month

With so many plants packed into the borders in the garden, it is impossible to label everything, but visitors always ask about what they see in bloom. My solution is to display flower specimens in jars, which seems to work a treat, especially when it comes to campanulas, as we grow many different types.

My favourite plants for July are: *Veronicastrum virginicum* 'Album'; *Campanula lactiflora* 'Alba'; *Galega officinalis*; *Campanula lactiflora*; *Clematis* Blue Angel; *Campanula latifolia*; the pale-blue *Clematis* Confetti and the orange climber *Eccremocarpus scaber*, which scrambles up our yew hedging. A little display such as this is a great way to learn the plants in your garden, and share them with your friends.

### Remember to...

Clean your bird bath. Our garden is home to many bird baths, and I scrub them out on a regular basis. I simply use a stiff brush to sweep out the water and brush off the green slime. It's a satisfying job that the many birds here appreciate. →







## Sweet pea picking

The sweet peas growing in the kitchen garden continue to offer bunch after bunch of scented flowers. I pick them first thing in the morning, even if the bunch is required for an evening gift or display. They are then placed in a flower bucket, and left in a cool place. Our old stone stables are the perfect flower fridge.

The beauty of sweet peas is that they keep coming, and if you don't pick them, they quickly go to seed. There isn't the usual guilt that comes with picking border flowers. Our sweet peas are supported by hazel branches that are harvested from the farm, so even as the foliage starts to brown and the inevitable seedpods appear, the sweet peas look graceful in their slow decline.

They are by far and away the favourite plant with visitors. If only the perennial sweet pea *Lathyrus rotundifolius* offered such perfume from its soft-red flowers - what a plant that would be.

## JOBS THIS MONTH

### Watering plants

The beds and borders in our Herefordshire garden are never watered - apart from the strawberry and asparagus beds. We only water plants in containers and in our plant sales area, and we make good use of collected rainwater with water butts. Most established plants can cope with a dry summer, and watering border plants little and often, in my experience, makes them less drought resistant. If we plant trees, shrubs and perennials at the right time, we have little need to worry about watering.

Whatever you are irrigating, the best time to do so is in the morning or evening. Water well and less often, rather than a trickle here and there.

**LEFT** Pick sweet peas in the morning for lasting blooms. **BELOW** Water well less often, rather than little and often.



## ON TRIAL: Sowing seeds in wool compost

There is a feel-good factor about Wool Compost For Seeds from Dalefoot Composts, as it is made on a traditional hill farm in the Lake District National Park. The wool in the mix comes from whitefaced woodland and cheviot sheep.

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my hardy annuals. The seeds germinated at speed, and once transplanted into the borders, the compost from the pot was a welcome addition to my raised beds. I enjoyed using this compost, and the results were satisfying.

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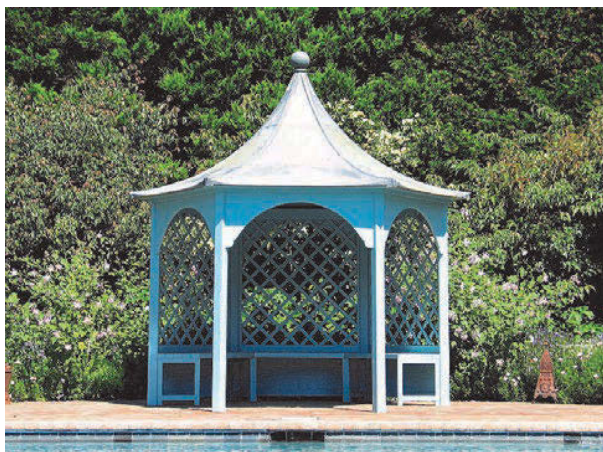


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# GLOBAL GREATS

Bleddyn Wynn-Jones of Crûg Farm Plants reveals his top three spurges collected from around the world



*Euphorbia  
stygiana*

A popular shrubby type that closely resembles *E. mellifera*, *E. stygiana* from the Azores forms a shorter plant for us. This species performs well on a sunny, well-drained bank exposed to strong south-westerly gales. It is an imposing evergreen species forming lax stems to 1.5m tall in gardens (much taller in the wild). It has dark-green lanceolate leaves (with a contrasting decorative pale mid-rib) to 15cm long, which can transform to a bright red in winter. Bears terminal diffuse umbel-like inflorescences of pale-yellow floral leaves, subtending the pale-green and contrasting brown-centred flowers in May-June.



*Euphorbia  
sikkimensis*

Hailing from a different continent is the Asiatic *E. sikkimensis*, which has a relatively moderate colonising habit in a rich soil. It only forms a patch of around 1m<sup>2</sup> after the best part of 20 years. With red buds emerging from the ground in early spring, it slowly forms upright reddened stems to 1m tall. Bears broadly based, lanceolate, decoratively marked, dark-green leaves with a distinguished red to pink mid-rib. Topped June to August by showy chartreuse-yellow bracts surrounding the yellowish inflorescences. We found a particularly well-coloured form of this species in a deep remote valley in the Himalaya.



*Euphorbia  
griffithii*

From the same part of the world comes *E. griffithii*, a species that seems to have been around for some time. It is a perfectly hardy species as long as it is grown in a drained soil, where it can sometimes act quite boisterous, popping its head up in the most unexpected places. That apart, its habit is somewhat similar to *E. sikkimensis*, with upright dark stems to 1m tall, with narrow lance-shaped leaves, which are tinged reddish-purple and have pale-red mid-ribs. Bears variably coloured orange to dark-red showy bracts in terminal umbels surrounding the small yellow flowers in early summer.

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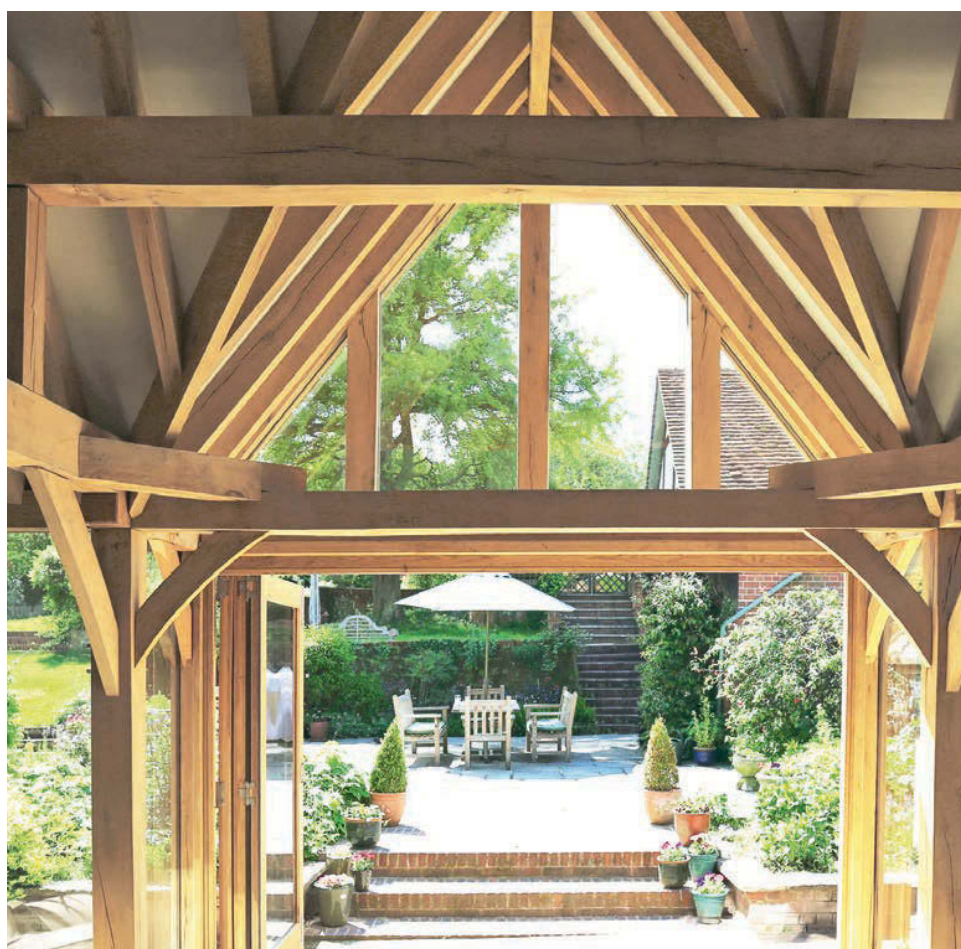
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Introduced in 1978, 'Eva Cullum' was named by Alan Bloom after a lady who worked at his nursery. It flowers over many months and has handsome dark foliage.

# FANTASTIC MR PHLOX

---

They're long-flowering, deliciously scented and easy to grow - so why don't more of us grow phlox? **Ambra Edwards** makes the case for bringing this cottage garden favourite back into the limelight →

PHOTOGRAPHS ANNAÏCK GUITTENY





**LEFT** Robust, strongly fragrant, and with striking dark foliage, 'Monica Lynden-Bell' is a superb all-rounder.

**BELOW** Tall and stately, 'Norah Leigh' earns its place in the garden for its variegated foliage alone.

*'They give you great upright structure, and there's nothing like them for fragrance'*



Plants, as all things, are subject to fashion, but it's always a mystery why a long-cherished garden stalwart should gradually slip out of favour, especially when it is robust, reliably hardy, long-lived and easy to grow. One such is

*Phlox paniculata*, long the mainstay of both the cottage garden and grand herbaceous border, with its extravagantly heavy trusses of flower and delicious sweet scent.

We're missing a trick, says nurserywoman Claire Austin. Phlox deserve a place in every garden. 'They're fantastic for colour - from whites and lilacs to ruby-reds through every shade of pink. They give you great upright structure, and there's nothing like them for fragrance.' Best of all, phlox peak in August, just when the garden is starting to flag. The earliest, like 'Eden's Flash' and 'David', start to flower in late June and early July respectively, while long-flowering varieties like 'Eva Cullum' will go on right into November. Many early performers, if deadheaded, will oblige with a second flush.

Phlox are also blessedly unfussy. While they do best in a rich, fertile, moisture-retentive soil, they will put up manfully with more or less any garden soil, just growing a little shorter and less ebullient. Only thin, dry, sandy soils will reduce their vigour and increase their susceptibility to powdery mildew, though both the lovely silky-petalled 'Monica Lynden-Bell' and variegated 'Norah Leigh' will perform admirably in a drier spot. 'Norah Leigh' has dainty lilac-white flowers with bright-pink eyes, but her chief attraction is her handsome foliage, richly edged in cream. 'Monica Lynden-Bell' is gorgeous, opening from dark, winey buds to the palest blush-pink, with a cast-iron constitution that belies her delicate looks. Both do best in light shade.

Phlox are a magnet for bees and butterflies, and are untroubled by slugs and snails. Only the very tallest ever need staking. And they are not only lovely in the garden, but make excellent, long-lasting cut flowers. So why on earth have they fallen out of favour?

### THREE SMALLER PHLOX

Phlox can be very variable in height, depending on where they are grown. The tallest varieties can reach up to 1.5m in a damp, well-nourished spot. But there are also compact, bushy varieties ideal for the front of the border. Some have sacrificed fragrance for superior flower power, but these three retain their old-fashioned sweet scent.

**1 'Grenadine Dream'** The best of the 'reds', with purple spring leaves followed by heavy conical trusses of flower. No phlox is true red: there is always an element of pink. Grows to 50cm tall.

**2 'Little Boy'** A dwarf 'blue' with large purple-and-white flowers, which makes a solid clump. Likes moisture. To 40cm.

**3 Peacock White** The compact and well-branched Peacock series has been bred for disease resistance and heat tolerance - not really an issue in the average British summer. The enormous white panicles re-flower well. To 45cm tall.





Claire Austin thinks it might be because they tend to look a bit peaky when grown in pots, so they are not plants that will fly off the shelves in a garden centre. ‘Don’t let that put you off,’ she says. ‘Once you put them in the ground and their roots are no longer constricted, they’ll be as right as rain, and will reward you with many years of colour.’

While there are unashamedly garish phlox - ‘Becky Towse’, with purple-red flowers over strident gold-variegated foliage, springs to mind - there are just as many of understated elegance - ‘Monica Lynden-Bell’, of course; ‘Danielle’, with radiant snow-white flowers that seem to be lit from within as the sun goes down; and the hard-to-find but exquisite ‘Grey Lady’, in the softest lilac with a creamy central star. This tall, regal phlox is one of those plants rescued from extinction by the Hardy Plant Society: supremely garden-worthy, but still not widely available. A very acceptable substitute might be ‘Katherine’. In a similar subtle lavender shade, also with a cream centre but with a fine cream edge to the petals, it is a little shorter and denser in flower, but no less ladylike, and wonderfully strong and floriferous. →

**ABOVE, FROM LEFT** Bold and brash, you can’t miss ‘Becky Towse’; the fabulously fragrant ‘Uspekha’ hails from Russia, where phlox are hugely popular; ‘Grey Lady’ has been on the Hardy Plant Society’s endangered list for over a decade, and deserves to be more widely grown.

### TOP PHLOX GROWING TIPS

- **Remember their origins on the North American prairies.** Phlox prefer deep soil, dampness at the roots and big, wide open spaces - don’t crowd them round with other plants, but let the air circulate freely around those dense panicles of flower.
- **Phlox are voracious,** so beef up the soil with organic matter and lashings of fish, blood and bone in spring.
- **Mulch thickly to keep moisture in,** and keep plants well watered in dry periods. Avoid splashing the leaves to reduce the risk of mildew.
- **While phlox thrive in full sun where their roots are moist,** they generally prefer partial shade - morning sun and afternoon shade is the perfect combination.
- **Deadhead regularly.** You can also extend the flowering season by giving them the ‘Chelsea chop’ in late May, cutting back the front half of each plant to encourage branching and delay flowering. Or you can chop alternate plants.







*Phlox are a magnet for bees and butterflies, and they are untroubled by slugs and snails... and make excellent cut flowers*

→ Another excellent doer is **'Bright Eyes'** - a phlox that lives up to its name, with a twinkling deep-rose eye in a pale-pink face, set off by dark foliage that takes on reddish tints through the summer. 'Chintz' is similar, but with pointier petals. Sturdy 'Eva Cullum' offers warm-pink flowers borne on attractive dark red stems. And while Russian *émigré* **'Uspek'** (also sold as 'Laura') is not for the faint-hearted, it earns its place for its fabulous, lingering scent.

Many cultivars, including 'Katherine', 'Bright Eyes', 'Eva Cullum' and the handsome and heroically healthy white 'David', are widely marketed as 'mildew resistant'. Specialist grower Martin Blow says that's a misnomer. Powdery mildew can be a problem in dry seasons, when the best defence is to keep the air moving freely around well-watered plants, but no cultivar is entirely immune. Mildew won't kill the plant - it just looks a bit unsightly. The 'resistant' plants are affected less often, and carry on regardless.

A more pernicious problem is eelworm, a stem-borne nematode that can split the stem and reduce the leaves to a thread. It is, alas, incurable - but it won't occur in plants that have been propagated by root cuttings. If you make sure that you buy sound stock and are careful when lifting and dividing (try disinfecting your tools with a kitchen anti-microbial spray between plants), it shouldn't be a problem. Failing that,

follow the late, great plantsman Christopher Lloyd, and stick to begging bits of healthy plants from other people's gardens. As their rich, languorous perfume floods the darkening summer garden, you'll wonder how you ever managed without them. ♦

#### WHERE TO SEE & BUY PHLOX

● **Claire Austin Hardy Plants** A large range of phlox available by mail order only. Tel: +44 (0)1686 670342. [www.claireaustin-hardyplants.co.uk](http://www.claireaustin-hardyplants.co.uk)

● **Long House Plants** Lots of phlox available to buy. Limited opening times - see the website for details. Church Road, Noak Hill, Romford, Essex RM4 1LD. Tel: +44 (0)1708 371719. [www.longhouse-plants.co.uk](http://www.longhouse-plants.co.uk)

● **Norwell Nurseries** Nursery and one-acre garden packed with rare and unusual plants, including numerous phlox varieties. See website for opening times. Woodhouse Road, Norwell, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG23 6JX. Tel: +44 (0)1636 636337. [www.norwellnurseries.co.uk](http://www.norwellnurseries.co.uk)

● **Special Perennials** Many varieties of *Phlox paniculata* available by mail order and on sale at plant fairs - check the website for details. The nursery is not open to the public. Tel: +44 (0)1270 811443. [www.specialperennials.com](http://www.specialperennials.com)

**ABOVE, FROM LEFT** 'Bright Eyes' is an outstanding, trouble-free phlox that flowers for many weeks; the flowers of 'Danielle' glow in fading evening light; newish cultivar 'Katherine' offers good fragrance and pleasing red-tinged foliage.

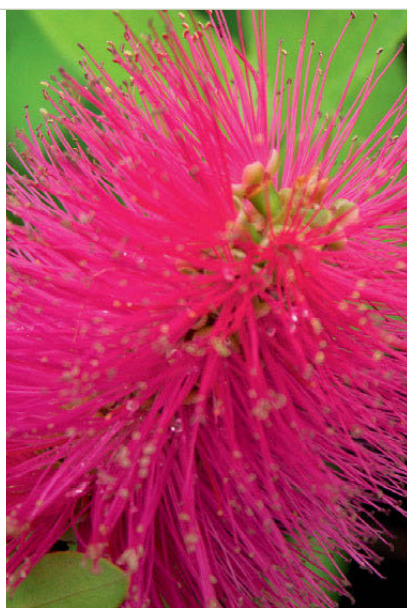


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# In praise of daisies

Did you know that a daisy is not actually a flower?  
We explore how some of our favourite daisies got their names

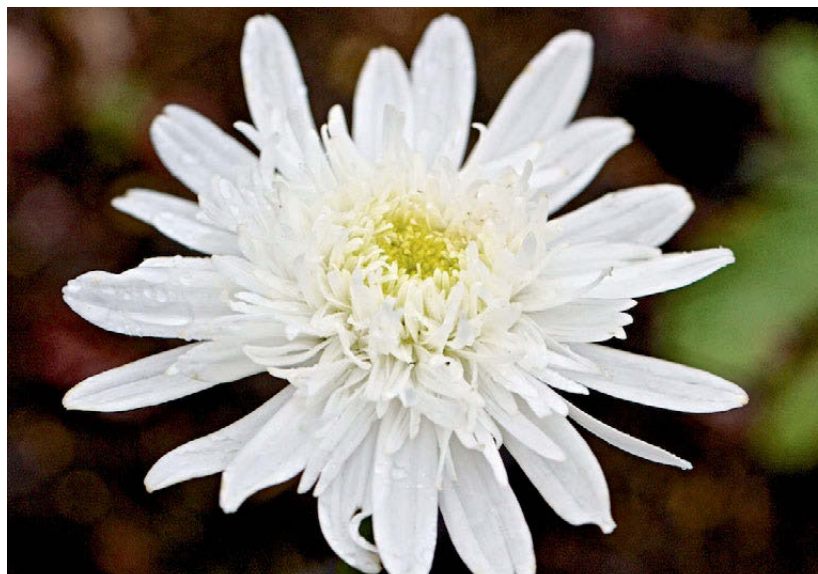
WORDS SARAH FEELEY

Norfolk nurseryman and breeder Horace Read was sitting on a train one day back in the 1920s when he spotted a rare semi-double ox-eye daisy, *Chrysanthemum leucanthemum* (now *Leucanthemum vulgare*), out of the window. Deciding this chance was too good to miss, on his homeward journey, when approaching the same spot, he pulled the communication cord and the train screeched to a halt. Horace dashed out, dug up the plant, and clambered back on board.

The Reads had been plantsmen for two centuries, and Horace was a breeder of note. Using his track-side prize and *Chrysanthemum maximum*, he experimented for years, and in 1931 he proudly exhibited *Leucanthemum* x *superbum* 'Esther Read', a white daisy with large, fully double blooms, named after his daughter.

It was an immediate success. With a long flowering season and a height of only 46cm, it was in demand as a front-of-the-border plant. Great for cutting, nurseries supplying the cut-flower market grew it extensively. This plant could have made Horace a very rich man - but back then, there was no system for patenting new plants, and soon many imitators emerged.

*Leucanthemum* x *superbum* 'Esther Read' is an unusual form of shasta daisy, with delicate white double



Did you know that a daisy is not, in fact, a flower? It is an inflorescence composed of tiny yellow flowers and surrounded by white, pink or red petal-like ligules.

The ox-eye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare* - 'vulgare' meaning 'common') is a typical grassland plant, and swathes of gently swaying ox-eye daisies can turn a field or roadside white in summer. Its large blooms appear

**ABOVE** *Leucanthemum* x *superbum* 'Esther Read' would not exist if plant breeder Horace Read had not taken action.

*He pulled the communication cord and the train screeched to a halt.  
He dashed out, dug up the plant, and clambered back on board*

flowers floating on tall stems above deep-green foliage. This herbaceous perennial has a clump-forming growth habit, and needs little or no maintenance. A magnet for bees and butterflies, it does best planted in full sun or light shade, dotted through a border or in a container.

The name 'leucanthemum' comes from the Ancient Greek *leukós*, meaning 'white', and *ánthos*, meaning 'flower'; and *superbum* means 'proud'. Formerly classified in the genus *chrysanthemum*, these daisies were transferred to their own genus of *leucanthemum* because they lack some traits of true *chrysanthemums*.

They come from the Compositae or Asteraceae family - 'aster', meaning 'star' in Greek, after its form. The name 'daisy', widely applied to members of this family, is derived from its Old English name meaning 'day's eye'. This is because the petals (of common daisy *Bellis perennis*) open at dawn and close at dusk.

from July to September, and are so bright that they appear to 'glow' in the evening, hence its common names 'moon daisy' and 'moon penny'. Easy to identify by its large, round flowerheads on single, tall stems, in Greek mythology 'ox-eye' was a flattering name given to Hera, the Queen of Olympian gods.

The shasta daisy has a distinct odour which some find unpleasant. A hybrid produced in 1890 by American horticulturist Luther Burbank, it was named after Mount Shasta in California for its snow-white petals. Free-flowering and one of the easiest perennials to grow, it makes a great display in your borders from June to September. Forgiving and generally disease free, shasta daisies grow to approximately 60cm and fare best when provided with some support. They prefer full sun, but will tolerate partial shade, and grow in almost any soil type, although they do object to waterlogging. ♦





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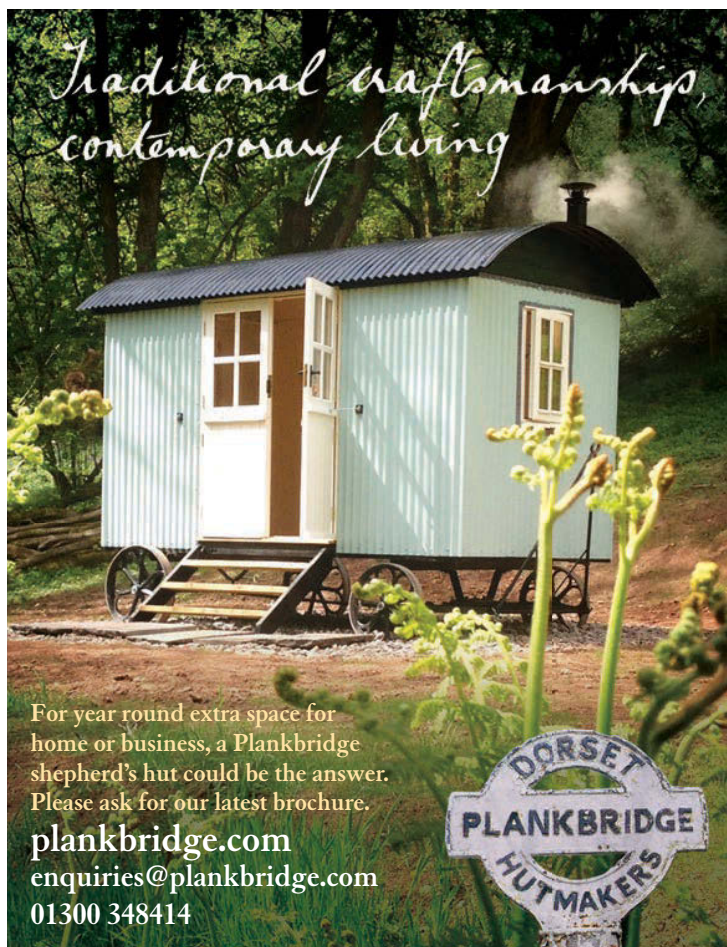
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# WORTH THE WAIT

Cut-flower grower and seed supplier **Benjamin Ranyard** believes no garden should be without biennials, and recommends 10 to sow for early flowers next year

**W**hen I began my adventures in cut-flower growing, I had very little space in which to grow plants, and the thought of growing some that wouldn't flower until the year after sowing seemed preposterous. I soon saw the error of my ways. I don't grow flowers from bulbs, as growing from seed is my thing, and if I didn't have my biennials in May and June, the harvest would be somewhat skimpy. April-sown annuals won't be strutting their stuff until July, and autumn-sown seeds will not yet have got a grasp of the work ethic. Biennials are flower-making factories - the more you harvest, the more they flower.

Biennials have a two-year biological cycle. The first season sees the plant germinate from seed, then create a low basal rosette of leaves and a strong root system. The following season completes the cycle, with flowers and seeds. The plant will usually die after the second year. Sow seeds from early June for strong and established seedlings that are ready to plant out in autumn.

In summer, my flower beds are full, so instead of sowing direct where they are to flower (a perfectly acceptable option), I sow my biennials in trays. I find that 15-cell modules do the job well. In these 9cm by 9cm square cells, the plants can fill the space without getting

pot-bound before it's time to plant them out. Biennials don't need much heat to nudge them into germination. I simply put my trays outside, somewhere out of the way, and let them get on with it. Just make sure you keep them watered.

Plant out biennials before the autumn equinox (when daylight hours and dark hours become equal). In 2015, this will be 23 September. In my own garden, I have room to spare at this time, as the sweet peas and autumn-sown annuals will have gone over.

## 1 <sup>↑</sup> Wild carrot (*Daucus carota*)

Although a common enough native plant, *Daucus carota* deserves a place in the garden, and certainly in the cut-flower garden. Thousands of delicate lacy flowers form an umbel with a solitary dark-purple flower at the centre. The umbel folds inwards as the flower runs to seed, and produces a nest-like tangle, which is a flower arranger's dream. Rustic chic at its best. 'Dara' is a good variety (*above*), but the wild form is my personal favourite. →





## 2 ← Viper's bugloss (*Echium vulgare*)

This handsome, native wildflower is probably the very best flower to attract bees. Give it a free-draining soil, and in return it will offer you stunning blue flowers that will flirt with your retina for months. Echium can freely self-seed, which of course can be a mixed blessing. In my garden in Cornwall, I grow a swathe of it, half of which is in partial shade, which it tolerates without complaint.

## 3 → Sweet rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*)

In Greek mythology, the daughters of Hesperis were nymphs of the sunset. I imagine this relates to the fact that the flower releases its heady scent in the evening. Hesperis has a purple and a white form, both of which can suit an informal planting scheme. It self-seeds freely. The petals are edible - sprinkle them on a salad, and your culinary skills will be the talk of the town.



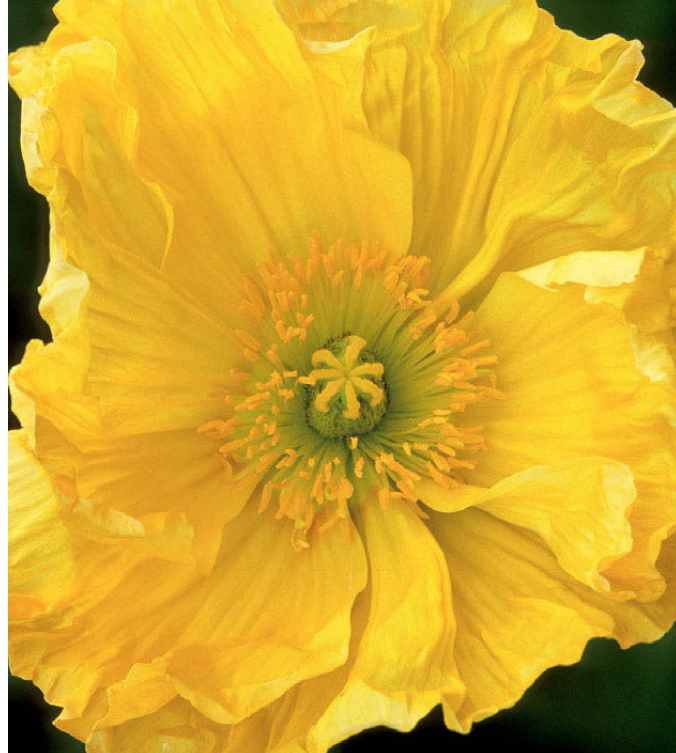
## 4 ← Wallflower (*Erysimum*)

Wallflowers fell out of grace with gardeners in the 1980s and 1990s. The Victorians (who I'm sure were a much more colourful bunch than we give them credit for) loved them, and used them extensively in their newly created city parks. Grow them for their wonderful scent and bold early colour. Colours in seed mixes can be wishy-washy, so opt for strong single colours. Try the bright-yellow *Erysimum cheiri* 'Cloth of Gold' (left) or the striking 'Blood Red'.



## 5 → Iceland poppy (*Papaver nudicaule*)

The arrival of these large, crêpe-paper-like flowers in early summer is nothing short of a joy. Although they are generally grown as a biennial, it is possible to have them flowering in the same year in which you sowed them, but they need to be sown no later than March. Iceland poppies hate root disturbance, so should be sown in pots (rather than trays) or directly in the soil where they are to grow. I recommend 'Party Fun', 'Meadow Pastels' (*right*) and 'Champagne Bubbles'.



## 6 ← Sweet William (*Dianthus barbatus*)

If asked to name a biennial flower, the first one most people might think of would be the mighty sweet William. The end of the 20th century saw them go out of fashion, like wallflowers, but cut-flower gardening is having a renaissance, and so are sweet Williams. And rightly so - they're scented, prolific and drop-dead gorgeous. Strong stems make them perfect for the cutting garden. I especially like 'Auricula-Eyed Mixed', 'Nigrescens' and Green Trick (*left*).



## 7 → Foxglove (*Digitalis*)

Slender yet imposing, foxgloves bring a giraffe-like elegance to the garden. Give them a leaf-rich soil in dappled shade, and they will thank you for it. For the purposes of cutting, they are fairly 'space greedy' for the limited cropping they offer, but who can put a cost on that level of charm? After harvesting, side shoots will produce a second flush of more delicate blooms. My recommended varieties include Excelsior Group (*right*), 'Sutton's Apricot' and 'Alba'. →







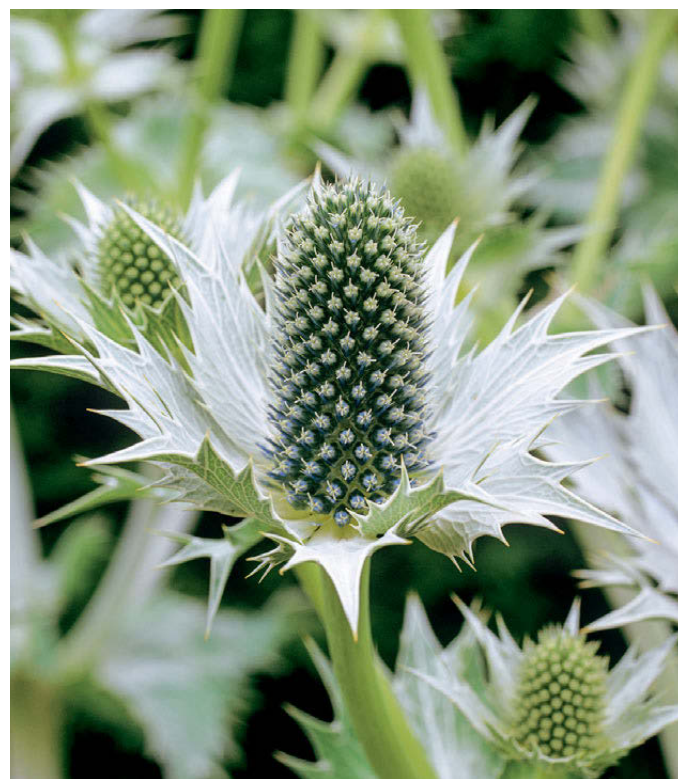
## 8 ← Honesty (*Lunaria annua*)

With white or purple four-petalled flowers and subsequent pale, smoky, moon-like seed discs, honesty is a fantastic addition to your flower patch. Happy in sun or partial shade, this is a no-fuss, no-nonsense plant, beloved by bees for its early offering of much-needed nectar. Prolong flowering by deadheading, or leave spent flowers to go full cycle in their journey to become attractive seedpods (*below left*) that will look good in the colder months.



## 9 → Sea holly (*Eryngium*)

Sea holly is hard to beat for its architectural offering. It's technically a short-lived perennial, but is best grown as a biennial. It will always fare better in the warmer parts of the UK, and prefers a well-drained, humus-rich soil. Sow seeds in pots with gritty compost and a thin covering of vermiculite. Germination can be erratic, and may take up to a year, so patience is needed here. If plants enjoy their planting position, they will often self-seed. Try *Eryngium giganteum* (previously known as 'Miss Willmott's Ghost', *right*).



## 10 ← Hollyhock (*Alcea rosea*)

As a child, these plants gave me the heebie-jeebies - they're towering and watchful, like a 1960s B-movie robot. Even now, I still think they're up to something. Grow them in a position that gets lashings of sun and has rich, well-drained soil. Seeds need only be lightly covered with soil. Later on, thin seedlings to 60cm apart. Hollyhocks are voracious self-seeders, but varieties may not stay true. Good varieties to try include 'Halo White' and 'Crème De Cassis'. ♦



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# THE POWER *of flowers*

One lucky couple have changed their lives and made a success of a rural cut-flower business, after discovering an old walled garden and a passion for growing →

PHOTOGRAPHS JOHN CAMPBELL | WORDS TAMSIN WESTHORPE

After being picked, the blooms are stored in a cool room that was once a dairy. Marigold 'Tall Scotch Prize' (front right) and *Verbena bonariensis* (top right) are favourites.





So many of us dream of escaping the rat race and starting a business linked to the land. Very few turn this dream into a reality, but Victoria and Barney Martin have taken the leap, and successfully launched a thriving cut-flower business called The Flower Garden, located in the walled garden of Stokesay Court in Shropshire.

After living and working for a time in China, the couple was keen to put down roots back in the UK, and Victoria was determined to turn her growing love of horticulture into a business. While abroad, she had worked for the son of renowned landscape architect Charles Jencks, designing roof gardens. On returning home, she added to her experience by spending a year in a Kent garden under the Women's Farm and Garden Association's Work and Retrain as a Gardener Scheme (WRAGS).

Meanwhile, Barney enrolled on a course at Harper Adams University in Shropshire to train as a rural surveyor. This line of work led him to discover that the owners of Stokesay Court were looking for a tenant for their historic walled garden.

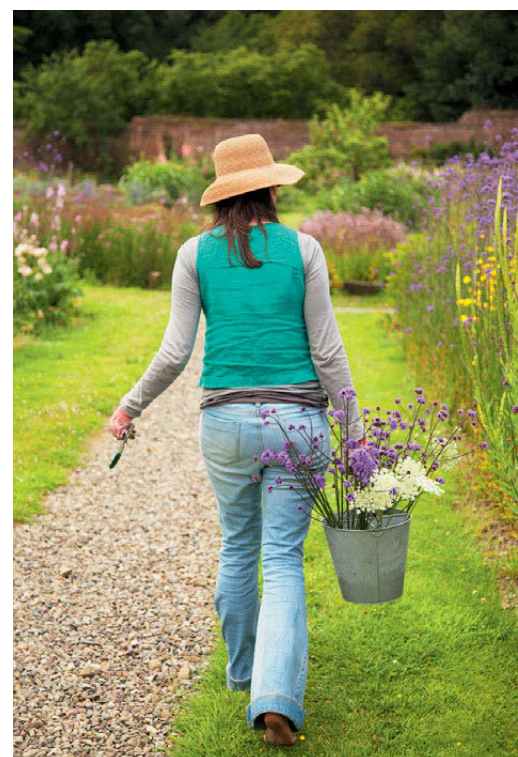
'The wonderful old kitchen garden was so atmospheric it felt like a perfect fit,' says Victoria, 'and in 2012, I started work on my own here.' She admits that the one-acre garden was a daunting project at the start. 'Fortunately, the previous tenants had cultivated the garden and kept it together,' she explains. Barney has since joined Victoria at the garden, and they now run the business together. The recent arrival of their son Henry has enhanced the family feel of this rural business.

Growing cut flowers was totally new to Victoria, but after some trial and error, the garden is now packed with blooms. 'We choose flowers for colour,

**ABOVE** From April until November, the one-acre garden is packed with flowers. **BELOW** Instead of using shrubs as a filler, Victoria prefers plants such as *Ammi majus* as a cushion between flowers. **RIGHT** Sweet peas are picked every day for wedding arrangements and scented bouquets.

texture and fragrance,' she explains, 'and most are grown from seed to keep the cost down.'

They are gradually adding to their plantings of roses and peonies, but growing a large amount of big strong flowers is challenging. This year, they are enjoying the results of expert rose pruning carried out by their friend Nicholas Savage. 'There are far more →



*'The flowers grown are very much down to colour and texture rather than specific types'*













*'We don't intend to create a big business - the best part of doing this is working together every day'*

→ flower buds forming thanks to his work,' explains Barney.

They are learning as they go, and are very accepting of advice. Barney is new to growing, but seems at home in his straw hat, hoe in hand. 'The dahlias are my favourites,' he says, 'and I'm really enjoying waging war on the slugs. Jam jars filled with slops from the local pub work a treat.'

For the first few years, Victoria sold flowers at the nearby Ludlow Market to create awareness of the business and to gauge the colours and styles that people were attracted to. 'This year, the meadow look is popular,' she says.

Having no formal training as a florist, Victoria has developed her own style, and now provides flowers for weddings, funerals and functions. 'This year, we have 10 weddings, but the dream would be 20,' she says. 'I enjoy meeting brides here at the garden, and hearing their plans. It's my favourite part of the job.'

The garden isn't open to the public, so when brides arrive, they pull the rope on the blue door to ring the cow

bell. Through the door, they arrive in a tranquil place - a secret garden. With such a dreamy scene, you could be excused for thinking this business was too good to be true. 'Our families thought we would starve at first!' says Victoria. 'But they are starting to become as attached to the garden as we are.' Setting up a business like this involves an initial investment, and Barney occasionally teaches Chinese to help make ends meet. For them, it is more about a lifestyle choice and a passion for growing than quick profit. 'We don't intend to create a big business - the best part of doing this is working together every day.'

Starting an enterprise like this is not without its challenges, but these two obviously have the personality and passion to go the distance. They are, it seems, really living the dream.

**The Flower Garden at Stokesay Court, Shropshire is not open to the public, but does provide flowers for events and occasions. Tel: +44 (0)1584 861345. [www.flowergardenatstokesaycourt.com](http://www.flowergardenatstokesaycourt.com)**

#### OPPOSITE

Victoria has developed her own style of floristry using mixed bunches.

**ABOVE LEFT** Pink and red achilleas fill the July garden and thrive on the well-worked soil. **ABOVE RIGHT** The old dairy is full of buckets of fresh flowers including eryngium, feverfew and cephalaria.

## Barney & Victoria's cut-flower tips

- **We start to sow** seeds in autumn and overwinter in a polytunnel, and sow again in spring.
- **Stick to growing** a few varieties well, and grow plants that suit your soil and aspect.
- **Look and learn.** As self-taught florists, we spend hours looking through books and magazines for creative ideas. We've also been inspired by the work of Sarah Raven.
- **The best roses for cutting** include the soft pink Queen of Sweden, orange Alexander's Issie and the coppery-yellow Rebecca Mary.
- **Great peonies for cutting** include 'Sorbet', 'Duchesse de Nemours' and 'Sarah Bernhardt'. But be aware that it takes a while for these plants to establish for cutting.
- **As a filler**, traditional florists use evergreen shrubs, but we work with *Ammi majus*, *Alchemilla mollis*, euphorbias and miscanthus, as we prefer soft bunches with movement.
- **For cutting flowers**, we use Burgon & Ball florists snips.
- **For best results**, we pick our flowers the day before arranging, in the morning, and leave them in water-filled flower buckets overnight.
- **Euphorbia is always** placed in a separate buckets, as the fresh sap can cause other flowers to suffer if mixed straight away.





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# THE REVIEWER

Here's our pick of new gardening book releases, spanning the genius of Piet Oudolf, the intricacies of Latin plant names, ingenious tiny veg plots and poems for garden lovers

## BOOK REVIEWS

### *Cultivating Chaos*

by Jonas Reif, Christian Kress & Jürgen Becker (Timber Press £25)

The theme of this book is close to my heart. My garden is made up of many displays of self-seeding accidents, and they are often the ones that cause the most impact with visitors. So hooray for this hardback book - it is a gem.

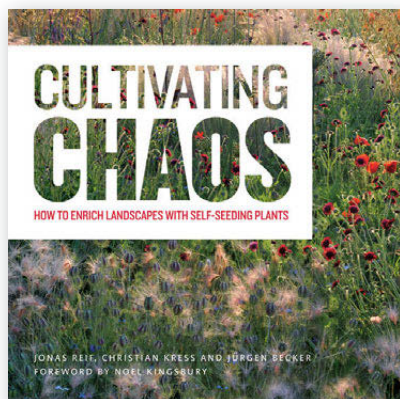
From the cover to the very back page, this book had me hooked. It is informative and inspirational, thanks to Jürgen Becker's stunning photography. At the front of the book, it explains the benefits of gardening with self-seeders - of which there are many - and then moves onto the lifespan of plants. If you haven't ventured into the world of self-seeding plants before, this is the door to enter through.

The authors look at gardens that offer a clear example, such as Derek Jarman's well-documented shingle garden, and - in complete contrast - the formal setting of Waltham Place in Berkshire. It is here that you'll realise how magical the results are when plants behave in their natural way.

Every aspect of self-seeded plants is featured: planting, maintenance and design. You will never need another book on the subject, and I challenge you to be left with an unanswered question. The book deserves a place by the bed and in the potting shed - it offers a changing pace throughout, and the detail in the captions is to be congratulated.

I really appreciated the catalogue of plants for self-seeding, which was arranged into plants for sun and shade, and even had a section for plants that will thrive in masonry joints. For this reason alone, this book will have to be prised from my muddy fingers. It is so clearly written by expert growers and people who have a complete understanding and passion for the subject. They have generously allowed us to share in their knowledge.

**Reviewed by Tamsin Westhorpe**



### *Onward And Upward In The Garden*

by Katharine S. White (NYRB, £11.99)

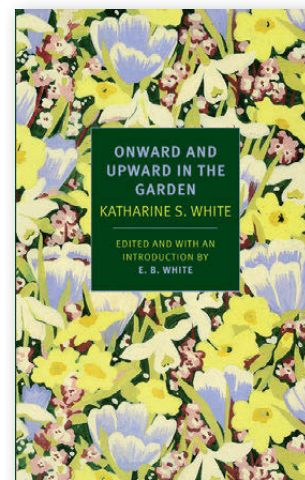
As the first fiction editor of *The New Yorker* magazine, Katherine S. White was at the centre of 20th-century American literature. With her editing career on the wane, she began writing articles for the magazine in the late 1950s on gardening, reviewing seed catalogues with the same critical gusto she had hitherto applied to novels.

This book is a collection of those articles, published posthumously by her husband E.B. White, author of *Charlotte's Web* and *Stuart Little*, and co-author of *The Elements of Style*. His introduction to his wife's work is a touching, entertaining portrait of a woman who would get caught up in the garden at their farmhouse in Maine, and end up gardening in her Ferragamo shoes and tweed suit. She 'preferred the simple to the ornate, the plain to the fancy, the relaxed to the formal, the single to the double... she loved old clay pots, despised plastic new ones... she was a devoted lover of flowers and vegetables, and an addict of catalogues'. She found it difficult to write, he explains, with the editor in her shooting down every effort the writer in her made to express herself.

Reading her seamless, enjoyably opinionated prose, however, you would never know of this internal struggle. Though the columns started as 'a romp through the catalogues', Katherine soon moved on to everything from flower arranging to lawns and scented plants to garden design, hingeing on publications she had read on these topics.

It is Americocentric, certainly, and she wrote the last piece in 1970, but the verve and passion with which she wrote transcends these distances, and make her someone you wish to spend more time with. We can only imagine how wonderful the column she wished to write on the gardens of her childhood would have been. →

**Reviewed by Stephanie Mahon**





## INTERVIEW

We spoke to Lia Leendertz about her new book *My Tiny Veg Plot* (Pavilion, £14.99).

### What is the idea behind your new book?

So many of us have limited space in which to grow food. This is a book about growing edible plants in tiny places - but one that shows, rather than tells. I tracked down 26 of the loveliest and most interesting tiny veg patches from around the UK and the world, and asked the gardeners themselves to tell me what makes them work. So it is packed full of examples from real gardeners to provide inspiration for readers with little space of their own.

### What are some of the unusual spaces where people grow vegetables?

There is a floating canal barge orchard, a wheelbarrow herb garden, roof gardens, balconies, an allotment on top of a shed, and many more. From the arid and infertile plains of Lesotho in South Africa, I found gardener Mankutloang Monmaheng, who has created a 'keyhole' garden - a sort of raised bed containing a compost basket for scraps - which helps her to concentrate fertility and grow nutritious crops that she could never have grown in the soil. And in the US, I found Ian Cheney, who has built a garden in the back of his pickup truck, and drives it around to teach local school children about the importance of growing your own. The creativity I found amazed me. People will find somewhere to grow.

### What are the benefits of growing your own vegetables?

Eating the best possible food, of course! There is nothing like your own sun-ripened tomatoes, just-picked herbs and soft new



potatoes. I think everyone should be able to have a little of that, no matter how small their growing space.

### Give us a tip for successful veg growing.

In a small space, it is important to pick your crops well. It was notable how few of the gardeners I spoke to grew the blander, bulkier crops, but a huge number grew herbs, garlic, chillies and the like. Choose crops that provide a lot of flavour for the space they take up.

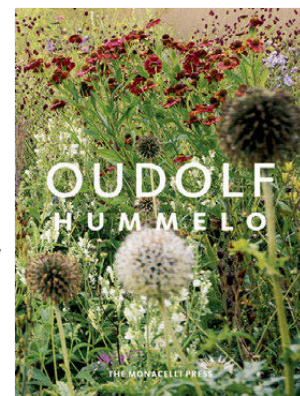
### What are some of the common veg-growing pitfalls?

For small gardens, I'd say water - or the lack of it - is the biggest pitfall. Growing in a small space often means growing in containers or raised beds, and these small amounts of soil dry out quickly. All of the most successful of the gardens I visited had one thing in common - great watering regimes. Put watering high on your agenda, and your tiny veg patch will be a success.

## JULY'S FRESH PICKINGS

### Hummelo

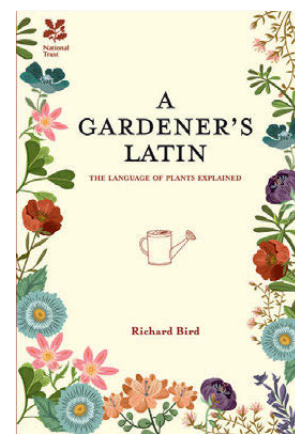
by Piet Oudolf & Noel Kingsbury  
(Monacelli Press, £40)



Published to celebrate his 70th birthday, this is an intimate look at how Piet Oudolf's home garden has evolved over the past three decades, mirroring developments in his career and personal style. True Oudolf devotees will revel in this book's heightened levels of detail, intensity and reverence.

### A Gardener's Latin

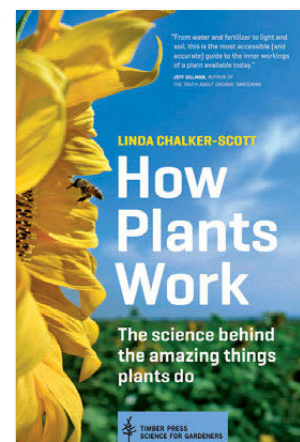
by Richard Bird  
(National Trust Books, £9.99)



This is one of those little books that you pick up for an idle flick while the kettle's boiling, only to get drawn in by fascinating details and intriguing references. Whatever your level of Latin, you will learn something you didn't know from this charming book that will help demystify how different plants got their names.

### How Plants Work

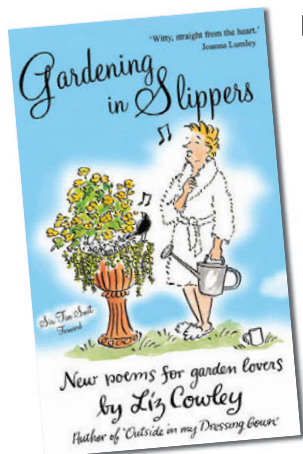
by Linda Chalker-Scott (Timber Press, £15)



How well do we really know the plants in our gardens? This book lifts the lid on how and why plants behave as they do - and once we understand that, our plots will flourish. It's jam-packed with science, but it's explained in an entertaining way that holds your interest. The author is American, but there's plenty here to interest UK gardeners.

## Rhymes that will chime with every garden lover

Gardening poet Liz Cowley is back with a new volume of humorous verse. *Gardening in Slippers: New Poems For Garden Lovers* (Gibson Square Books, £9.99) is packed with her signature warm and wicked wit. Her humorous tales of garden triumphs and disasters, nosy neighbours and infuriating weeds will chime with any gardener.







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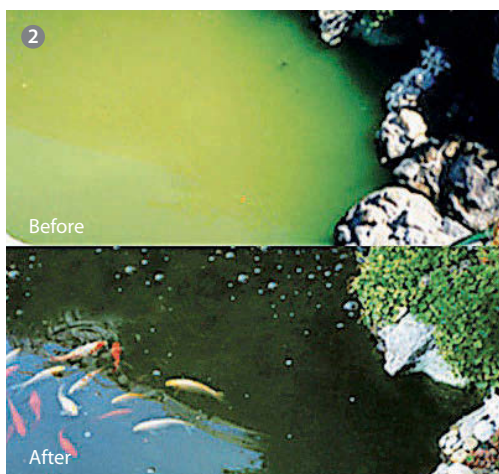
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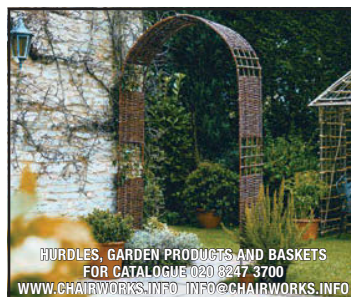
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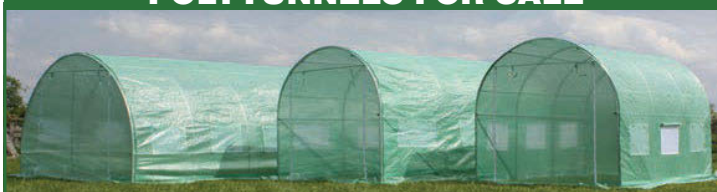
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I would love to have a greenhouse one day. There are so many plants that I'd love to grow, but can't, because my garden is just 5°C or so below their ideal range. I wander through those fancy ones at shows like RHS Chelsea and dream of sitting on a chair surrounded by Andean fuchsias and Arabian jasmine.

## MY FAVOURITE THINGS

# James Wong

Botanist, science writer and TV presenter James Wong shares his gardening treats and tips with us



The tool I use the most is a pair of cork-handled secateurs given to me by my friend Jean, who was horrified by my flimsy bargain-store pair. They combine Scandinavian steel blades with super-sleek aesthetics.



I'd say my favourite plant has to be *Trachycarpus fortunei*, but only if grown in damp shade. Left to bask in full sunshine (as they usually are), the canopy is pretty much guaranteed to be tatty and bristly, especially when planted by the seaside, where they get ravaged by wind and salt spray. Sacrilege! Popped in a dense understorey, the leaves stretch out to twice or three times the size, arching elegantly in all directions. They even become a darker shade of green, and develop a pronounced gloss. It's amazing how the same plant can go from 'boring Bournemouth bedding scheme' to 'wild and elegant 'Borneo'' by simply choosing the right conditions to plant it in.



I love Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens and the Lost Gardens of Heligan. Both are incredibly atmospheric and evocative. They make you feel like you've stepped into another world, which I believe is the function of all good gardens. I make the effort to go to both at least once a year. Much cheaper than a plane ticket to the Amazon!

My favourite thing about my garden is the soil. After years of hard graft, I have finally beaten my heavy London clay into submission by pouring on layer upon layer of organic matter. I never bother to dig it in, but simply pile on a 10cm layer once every spring, and again in autumn.



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